Fichte and Schelling: the Spinoza connection

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FICHTE AND SCHELLING: THE SPINOZA CONNECTION

ABSTRACT

The influence of Spinoza on Post-Kantian Idealism has been acknowledged by virtually all commentators in the area. Much research on the influence of Spinoza on Hegel has been already carried out by many of Hegel's commentators in both the Continental and Anglo-American tradition, and Hegel himself wrote a great deal on Spinozism. Detailed research and study on the influence of Spinoza on Fichte and Schelling, however, is still to be carried out in the Anglo-American tradition; and this situation is in contrast to the current scenario in Germany, where much effort has been devoted to this topic. Commentators in the Anglo-American tradition acknowledge the influence of some of Spinoza's views on Fichte's and Schelling's respective projects but fail to provide a detailed account of this influence. This thesis will attempt to help fill in the gap in this area by providing a detailed study of the influence of Spinozism on Fichte and Schelling. This will be done by drawing parallels and by demonstrating similarities between some of their philosophical views, as well as referring to textual evidence where Fichte and Schelling acknowledge, overtly or not, their debt to Spinoza.

This thesis is divided into three parts. In Part I I shall provide the context or background to this thesis. This part focus on the reception of Spinoza's writings in the Netherlands and Germany (chap. 1), the Enlightenment and Romantic movement as well as the Enlightenment crises (chap. 2), and Kant's attempt to solve the crises (chap. 3). In Part II and III I deal with Fichte's and Schelling's Spinozism respectively. Part II is divided into three chapters, which are entitled: "Metaphysics, Knowledge and Freedom" (chap. 4), "Theology and Religion" (chap. 5), and "Ethics" (chap. 6). Part III is also divided into three chapters, which are entitled: "From Kant to Fichte to Schelling: Spinoza's contribution to Absolute Idealism" (chap. 7), "Pantheism and God" (chap. 8), and finally "Deep Ecology" (chap. 9).

Finally, in this abstract I find it important to draw the reader's attention to a few issues. My sympathies with, or antipathies to, the various positions taken by the authors I discuss will no doubt be apparent as the thesis unfolds. And it could be said that this thesis is primarily intended as an exercise in the history, influence and study of some conceptual views particular to Spinozism, and as such it shall be of great interest to metaphysicians. But in doing so this thesis will also set the background for a proper understanding of Fichte's and Schelling's philosophical systems - this is an important point as there is a tendency in philosophical and academic circles to 'box in' philosophical systems as if these systems were self-contained and bore no connection with previous philosophical systems; moreover, there is also a tendency in these circles not to appreciate the legacy of philosophical systems either. As such, this thesis aims to help correcting this situation insofar as Spinoza, Fichte and Schelling are concerned - but it can be also viewed as a template for similar research in connection to other philosophical systems. It is also intended that the interpretations of Fichte and Schelling in the light of their Spinozism, which I propose will be useful to other scholars in their attempt to critically appraise the writings of these important figures.

INTRODUCTION

The title of this thesis has been inspired by Di Giovanni's chapter in the Cambridge Companion to Kant, "The First Twenty Years of Critique: The Spinoza Connection", where he gives an overview of the reception of the *First* Critique by scholars such as Jacobi, Reinhold and Fichte and which throws some light on the appreciation of Spinoza by the Post-Kantian Idealists (Di Giovanni 1992:417-448).

This thesis has been written in an effort to improve the understanding of Spinoza's, Fichte's and Schelling's philosophical views, and to shed some light onto the connection between Spinoza's views and Fichte's and Schelling's philosophical development. If, by reaching the end of this thesis, the reader feels that his understanding of these philosophers views has improved, and if the reader also feels that he has gained a good understanding that Fichte and Schelling searched in Spinoza for answers to the problems they faced in developing the Critical Philosophy of Kant, then I judge that my efforts here have been successful.

I first came into contact with Spinoza and his philosophy many years ago through the works of the Brazilian philosopher Marilena Chaui, who was and still is a prominent figure in Brazilian academia and politics. Marilena Chaui has in Brazilian society much the same status that Jean-Paul Sartre had in France. I became fascinated by Spinoza's persona and philosophy. His naturalism and determinism as well as the ethical and political implications that followed from his metaphysical views were, and still are, very appealing to me.

My appreciation for German Idealism, and particularly Kant and Hegel, happened much later whilst studying for my undergraduate degree in philosophy at the University of Edinburgh. It was around this time that my real motivation for writing this thesis occurred. Whilst studying

Schopenhauer for one of my courses in my undergraduate degree I came across a passage from Schopenhauer's The World as Will and Representation where he claimed that:

> After Kant's critique of all speculative theology, almost all those who philosophised in Germany followed Spinoza. All essays which are best known as post-Kantian philosophy are nothing more than a disguised Spinozism replete with a flowery incomprehensible terminology that has completely disfigured it. (Schopenhauer 1950:718-720) [my translation]

I found this an extraordinary thing to claim since I had previously understood that Spinoza's doctrines have been, to a certain extent, generally disregarded or dismissed by modern scholars. The same is true of the post-Kantian German Idealists, JG Fichte and FWJ Von Schelling. GWF Hegel escaped this trend as he enjoys the same great status as philosophers such as Immanuel Kant, John Locke and David Hume. As I understand it the significance of the philosophy of Spinoza, Fichte and Schelling has not been fully appreciated in the history of modern philosophy. By this I mean that the significance of Fichte and Schelling in the development of Hegel's and Hegelian philosophy (which was so influential in Continental European philosophy and Latin-American philosophy) has not been fully appreciated, particularly in the Anglo-American tradition. Moreover, the significance of Fichte's and Schelling's development of the Critical Philosophy of Kant has barely been acknowledged, as commentators tend to jump from Kant to Hegel as if there were nothing in between. Without Fichte and Schelling there would be no great Hegel and Hegelian philosophy. That said, this situation has started to change recently through the works of a few commentators who are writing and commenting on their

philosophies, and as such their fate is being revived or revitalised. There is an increasing interest in Fichte's legacy which is quite noticeable by the growing number of publications concerning his works and philosophical system; unfortunately, insofar as Schelling is concerned, he is still to be rediscovered by the majority of history of philosophy scholars as only a few commentators in this area have ventured in the study and on publishing material on Schelling's works and philosophical system. This is a welcome change to the current status quo. It is worth noting here that these commentaries on Post-Kantian German Idealism are usually divided into two groups, those who pursue a metaphysical reading and those who interpret Post-Kantian German Idealists in a non-metaphysical light. Those who pursue a metaphysical reading tend to read Post-Kantian Idealism as a direct development from Kant's Critical philosophy and argue that the Post-Kantian Idealists, by and large, disregarded Kant's advice that we should not engage with concepts of which we can have no experience (for instance, Fichte's concept of the Absolute I when this is interpreted as God). Those who interpret Post-Kantian Idealism in a non-metaphysical light tend to try to demonstrate that Post-Kantian Idealism still bears importance for today's philosophical development by revisiting their insights into problems, which are still troublesome for contemporary philosophy (for instance, Fichte's concept of the Absolute I when this is interpreted as the rationality and spontaneity of the mind). Some commentaries have tried to strike a balance between these two positions and this will be my aim in this thesis. In this thesis I shall not, I could not, unload the metaphysical content; but whenever possible I shall also point out that Fichte's and Schelling's approach were very insightful and that they bear importance for particular problems faced by contemporary philosophy.

To the same extent that Fichte's and Schelling's importance has not been acknowledged, the impact of Spinoza's views have not been fully appreciated either. That is to say that the

importance of Spinozism for the development of subsequent philosophical schools has not been acknowledged. Spinoza tends to be referred to as the great metaphysician of the 17th century who defended a monism; a monism that perplexed most of his contemporaries and which still perplexes many philosophy students who attempt to study his thought. The influence of his thought, the history of the development of Spinozism, is hardly ever an issue which is touched upon by commentators, scholars and students. This is perhaps due to the tendency in academic and scholarly circles to read philosophical systems as self-contained, as bearing no connection with 'what came before' and 'what happened after'. Within this scenario philosophical systems are in danger of not being fully or correctly understood, and thus the importance of demonstrating and acknowledging the influence of Spinoza in Fichte and Schelling for a proper understanding and interpretation of their philosophical systems. Kant's influence on Fichte and Schelling is only 'half of the picture', the other 'half', Spinoza, is still to be brought into the light, at least insofar as the Anglo-American tradition is concerned.

But to refer back to Schopenhauer's quote, if Schopenhauer is right and "after Kant's critique of all speculative theology, almost all who philosophised in Germany followed Spinoza", then Spinoza's impact on the post-Kantian German philosophy has not been fully accounted for either; it has only been acknowledged by a handful of commentators who have not explored this avenue in its entirety.

It is interesting to note at this point a passage from Moreau (1997:408), where he comments on the impact of Spinoza's views on certain philosophical movements. I quote:

> Investigating "Spinozism" teaches at least as much about interpretation of Spinoza by other movements - both those approving him and (more often) opposing him -

> as it does about Spinoza's thought itself. More than other philosophies, Spinoza's has been held up like a mirror to the great currents of thought, a mirror in which their distorted images may be seen...In this way one can see Calvinism, Cartesianism, the Enlightenment, and other movements, look upon their reflections, and see their own contradictions revealed in it.

Since as Moreau acknowledges Spinozism has influenced a number of philosophical schools, such as those associated with the Enlightenment, it seems fair to say that Spinozism also influenced the German post-Kantian Idealist movement since it was a direct outcome of the Enlightenment movement. That said, much investigation is required to establish this point satisfactorily.

In order to demonstrate, and prove, my points I will divide this thesis into three parts. In the part I, which is divided into three chapters, I will set the background to my investigation. In chapter 1 I will investigate Spinoza's reception in the Netherlands and Germany, since the early reception of Spinoza's works in the Netherlands impinged a great deal on his later reception in Germany and elsewhere. In the second chapter I will provide the reader with a snapshot of the academic zeitgeist during the 18th century by providing a brief characterisation of the enlightenment and romantic movements; in this chapter I shall also demonstrate that Spinozism had become fashionable again at the time due to the pantheism controversy, an event that involved Lessing, Jacobi and Mendelssohn, who were major philosophical figures at the time. In the third chapter I will demonstrate how Kant, who is the prominent influence in the Post-Kantian German Idealists, tried to solve the many problems faced by the enlightenment and romantic movement, and how he failed, and this concludes part one of this thesis. In part II and

III I shall respectively assess Fichte's and Schelling's Spinozism. Part II is divided into three chapters, as follows: "Metaphysics, Knowledge and Freedom" (chap. 4), "Theology and Religion" (chap. 5), and "Ethics" (chap. 6). Part III is also divided into three chapter, which are entitled: "From Kant to Fichte to Schelling: Spinoza's contribution to Absolute Idealism" (chap. 7), "Pantheism and God" (chap. 8), "Deep Ecology" (chap. 9). In Part II and III I shall attempt i. to investigate to what extent Spinozism influenced Fichte and Schelling, and ii. to try to demonstrate that there are some striking similarities between these philosophers' systems and Spinoza's, and iii. to try to identify some aspects of the Fichtean and Schellingian philosophy which represent further developments of some Spinozian ideas since it is entirely conceivable that Fichte and Schelling modified some aspects of Spinozism, aspects which they might have considered problematic, to suit their own philosophical pursuits, which was to solve the problems of the Kantian philosophy, and iv. to try to demonstrate that Fichte's and Schelling's philosophical systems are better understood in the light of their Spinozism as a reaction to the problems of Kant's critical philosophy, and as such both Kant and Spinoza provide the background for a proper understanding of Fichte's and Schelling's philosophy. I shall then conclude this thesis.

I beg the reader to note at this point that I shall concentrate my efforts in dealing solely with Fichte's and Schelling's Spinozism, and as such, I shall not deal with the influence of Spinozism on Hegel, the other great Post-Kantian German Idealist, in this thesis, since his Spinozism has been acknowledged, accepted, and studied in some detail by various commentators, such as Yovel (1989) in his book Spinoza and Other Heretics, Oittinen (2005) in his chapter "Hegel und Spinoza in 'Glauben und Wissen'", Michelini (2004) in his article "Sostanza e assoluto: La funzione di Spinoza nella 'Scienza della Logica' di Hegel", Savorelli

(1998) and his "Bertrando Spaventa e la via stretta a Spinoza tra Bruno e Hegel", Hosle (1997) in his "Hegel and Spinoza", Molinu (1996) and his "Logica del cominciamento in Hegel e Spinoza", Armour (1992) and his "Being and Idea: Developments of Some Themes in Spinoza and Hegel", Garcia (1981) and his "Hegel ante Spinoza: Un Reto", Parkinson (1977) in "Hegel, Pantheism and Spinoza", Shmueli (1972) in "Some Similarities between Spinoza and Hegel on Substance", and Foss (1971) in "Hegel, Spinoza, and a Theory of Experience as Closed", and Gatens and Lloyd in their Collective Imaginings: Spinoza, Past and Present (1999). These are but a few of the writings that can be found on the topic of Hegel and Spinoza, and added to this is the fact that Hegel himself wrote extensively on some of Spinoza's views in various writings. As such I have decided in this thesis to concentrate my efforts on Fichte's and Schelling's Spinozism since the literature here is much sparser and I judge this particular field deserving some development.

PART I

CONTEXT: SPINOZA IN 18TH CENTURY GERMAN THOUGHT

CHAPTER 1

SPINOZA'S RECEPTION IN THE NETHERLANDS AND GERMANY

When one hears the name Baruch Spinoza what springs to the mind is an image of the great 17th century rationalist who was vilified by his contemporaries for what they judged to be atheism or pantheism. Recent research in this area has demonstrated that this matter is not as clear cut as it first seems, and thus, I propose to investigate the reception of Spinoza's thought from the publication of his works to the 1780s when the pantheism controversy brought Spinozism out in the open. The starting point for this investigation will be the Netherlands, since this is the place where Spinoza was born, lived, worked and died. The second part of this investigation will focus on Spinoza's reception in Germany, since the focus of my thesis is to establish Spinoza's thought as a major cornerstone in the rise of Post-Kantian German Idealism. Also, it is extremely important to try to understand Spinoza's early reception since this is bound to impinge on his later reception. If one is able to fully understand how Spinoza's philosophy was first received in the Netherlands, how it impinged on the Dutch academic as well as wider life, then it will be easier for one to understand how Spinoza's thought was received in Germany, and how it impinged on German academic life. In fact, as Schröder (1996:157) argues,

> the process called reception of philosophical theory and the emergency of -isms,..., would be described in an over-simplified manner if we assume that only (a) the theory adopted and (b) those who adopted the theory were involved in it. At least one more factor involved in this process must be taken into consideration:

> the understanding and the reception of a philosopher's work depends to no little extent on the way in which earlier interpreters and especially his disciples represented it - that is to say, the Dutch Spinozists of the late 17th and early 18th century - influenced the fortune of their Master's philosophy abroad.

Thus, in order for one to understand how and why Spinozism flourished in Germany during the 18th and 19th century it is important to understand not just what Spinozism is and who adopted such a theory but also how Spinozism was received and interpreted by early Dutch and German interpreters.

SPINOZA'S RECEPTION IN THE NETHERLANDS

How was Spinoza's thought received in the Netherlands? It is usually understood that Spinoza's thought was met with extreme hostility, and that his books were banned as soon as they were published in the Netherlands. This view is not far from the truth, but it fails to acknowledge that some groups and people welcomed Spinoza's revolutionary philosophy, as I shall demonstrate during the unfolding of this section.

The starting point for an investigation of Spinoza's early reception ought to be with the publication of his first work. The first book published by Spinoza was his Tractatus Theologico - Politicus in 1670, and for reasons of prudence it was published anonymously at Amsterdam, for Spinoza must have known that it would stir up strong feelings. The Tractatus is part commentary on the Bible and part political treatise, and it has as its main aim the defence of full freedom of thought and religious practice. This book soon achieved notoriety due to its author's

identification of God with Nature, or as Spinoza puts it *Deus sive Natura*. That is, people then charged the author of the Tractatus with i. atheism since it denied the existence of a personal God, and ii. pantheism since it identified God with Nature. Whether or not these charges are correct is not relevant at this stage, but it must be said here that there is much debate among commentators regarding this matter.

Let me now go back to the matter of the publication of the Tractatus. Popkin (1987:101), on writing about the Tractatus, notes that "little public printed discussion occurred in the first years after its appearance and after its being banned".[1] This could have been a very peculiar phenomenon unless, as Van Bunge (1989:228) notes, "one of the reasons for this phenomenon may perhaps have been that two of the most significant intellectual movements within the Republic, i.e. the Cartesians and the Remonstrant, simply had the bad luck that their respective spokesmen died before they could personally see their replies through the press". This seems to be a very plausible reason for the lack of published commentaries and interpretations of Spinoza's Tractatus, since there is little doubt that the Tractatus was decried as soon as it was published and banned under the Anti-Socinian Act[2] of 1653 which remained in force for a considerable time and was the foundation for all intellectual censorship in the Republic.

It is interesting to note that the banning of books and intellectual censorship in the Republic was not very effective because many copies of Spinoza's works were being read in the

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[1] NB. The Remonstrand are a Dutch religious society. It has its origins in the dissidence of Jacobus Arminius and the signing of the 'Remonstrance' against strict Calvinism by 44 ministers. They put forward some points proclaiming the responsibility of man, pre-ordination through foreknowledge of faith, and that Christ's death was sufficient for all. These points are rooted in the Gospel of Jesus and based on tolerance and freedom.

[2] NB. Socianism basically held the views that i. Christ was human and not divine, ii. that human beings possess free will and thus it preached against the Lutheran idea of predestination, iii. argued in favour of pacifism and against all wars, iv. argued for the separation of church and

Netherlands and abroad. This inefficacy was likely due to lack of enforcing means by the Republic officials, but the banning and censoring of Spinoza's books and ideas was not an empty gesture by the authorities of the Republic. Israel (1996:14) corroborates this:

> the banning of Spinoza's books by the Dutch secular authorities...however incomplete and unsystematic was by no means merely an empty formality. It may be true that Spinoza's books, despite all these orders and edicts, were still being bought and sold...in the book-shops of Amsterdam. But his books could not be advertised, hung up in shop windows...Nor could Spinoza's books be cited in debate, academic discourse, or books.

Thus, Spinoza's books were being sold under the counter in book-shops in the Republic, even if they were banned and censored.

Another point to be noted is that Spinoza's ideas were so revolutionary in his time, and hence offended against the 17th century status quo, that the bad publicity must have added to the curiosity of many people, and thus increased considerably the number of Spinoza's readers. It must also be noted that after those first few years when little had been published on Spinoza's ideas that a great amount of interpretations and commentaries were published since "all significant parties within the Republic seem to have found it imperative to provide an answer to what they obviously regarded as an extremely serious threat to the very core of their particular creeds" as noted by Van Bunge (1989:243). Any commentary or interpretation of Spinoza's works, however truthful to Spinoza's project, helped to propagate Spinoza's ideas since they

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state, and v. argued in favour of reason over dogma. Thus, it is easy to see why Spinoza's

attempted to either refute or explicate Spinoza's thought, which added to the furore over Spinoza's name.

So far it has been established that Spinoza's works and ideas were decried and banned by the various authorities in the Republic. Moreover, it is also interesting to note here that Spinoza's ideas earned him excommunication (i.e. *Cherem* or *Herem* which is actually the total exclusion of a person from the Jewish Community and it has no connotation of damnation attached to it as in the case of the Christian excommunication), and thus, he became persona non grata in the Netherlands. He was asked by the leading rabbis of Amsterdam to retract his views and take a low profile. Needless to say that Spinoza did neither. Apparently, he became even louder and spoke of his views at every opportunity. The Jewish community had no other option but to excommunicate him in their effort to silence him.

Given that we know that no one in the Jewish community was allowed to maintain contact with Spinoza and that he became persona non grata in the Republic, and given that we also know that Spinoza's works were been sold under the counter and that the banishing of his books was unsystematic and incomplete, and given that later on in the 17th century a number of commentaries or interpretations of Spinoza's works were published, the question here is: who bought Spinoza's books, and the commentaries and interpretations of such books? And even important even: who was writing such commentaries and interpretations?

As I mentioned above, Spinoza defended the identification of God with Nature, preached determinism, advocated the view that only reason is the way to truth and salvation, and he also criticised the Bible. All this provoked fiery and lengthy discussion among the various religious and academic groups in the Netherlands. Recent research in this area has shown that in the

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Tractatus was banned under the Anti-Socinian Act, since Spinoza held at least i., iv., and v.

Netherlands, Spinoza's ideas were being taken up and propagated at a very early time, as Siebrand (1988:13) corroborates: "On July 20, 1668, the medical doctor and jurist Adriaan Koerbagh was questioned by the Amsterdam police. He was taken prisoner because he had written two books for the education of the Dutch people. In answer to their interrogations, he conceded that he was associated with Spinoza". Thus, just eight years after the publication of the Tractatus books written under the influence of Spinoza were being written and published under disguise. This is evidence that Spinoza's ideas were being taken up at a very early stage and that at least a few of his contemporaries welcomed his revolutionary thought and ideas.

Most commentaries and interpretations of Spinoza's works had come from Cartesian thinkers, and since Cartesianism was being discredited and undermined by Spinoza's ideas, the Spinozist threat started growing to new dimensions. Many scholars of this time saw Spinozism as a threat to the church and state, and since Spinoza's works, as well as commentaries and interpretations of his works, were available in the vernacular, more and more ordinary people, and not only the educated, started encountering the revolutionary ideas of Spinoza. There are many instances of this and I wish to mention a few cases briefly.

One of the first commentaries on Spinoza's thought is to be found in Dictionnaire Historique et Critique which was first published in 1695 by the Cartesian Pierre Bayle. Bayle is extremely critical of Spinoza's thought, claiming that it is inconsistent and that it leads to a number of absurdities.[3] I do not wish to examine Bayle's interpretation here, since this would be

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[3] NB. one of the main points made by Bayle is to do with his understanding of the concepts of substance and mode in the works of Spinoza. Bayle reads Spinoza as a Cartesian, and thus he understands that Spinoza uses the term substance and mode in much the same way as Descartes and the Scholastics did. That is to say, that he understands that for Spinoza , substance is the subject, and that mode is the property which inheres in the subject. Bayle understands that Spinoza is inconsistent here because if the substance is God and everything else is a modification of God, i.e God is the subject and everything else is a property of God, then this implies a

straying from the main purpose of this section. The important point here is not the merits of Bayle's Cartesian interpretation, but the fact that by the end of the 17th century books which explicitly mentioned Spinoza's name and thought were being published and sold in the open. Therefore, it seems that by the end of the 17th century the Anti-Socinian Act of 1653, under which Spinoza's books were banned, was no longer in force. Another point to be made at this point is that Bayle's interpretation was very influential, it became one of the classic refutations of Spinoza, and thus it set the tone for many Anti-Spinozists during the 18th century in their effort to overcome the threat of Spinozism. The Dictionnaire ran to five editions during the 18th century, was translated into German and became part of the canon in most universities.

Wielema (1996:103-115) notes that in the Dutch province of Zeeland, which in the 1670s had been extremely disturbed by religious and political disputes, a new sect called the Hattemists, after Pontiaan Van Hattem, was on the rise. Van Hattem held similar views to Spinoza, such as the idea of salvation. Both Spinoza and Van Hattem held the view that man can achieve salvation by acknowledging that he is part of God, that is, by acknowledging that God is immanent to all things. It is true that not all Hattemist ideas can be traced back to Spinoza's thought, and that not all Hattemist views were held by Spinoza; nevertheless, the fact that they shared some views with Spinoza, and that they acknowledged that some of their views were borrowed from Spinoza's, awarded them the title of Spinozists, which by this time was a synonym for atheist. Van Hattem, and the Hattemists, are evidence that some people and groups welcomed Spinoza's revolutionary ideas and were borrowing some of Spinoza's ideas for their own purposes. Van Hattem was using some of Spinoza's ideas, not to undermine religion and

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number of absurdities. For instance, since there are healthy and sick people at any given time, then since everything is a modification of God, then God will have contradicting properties at

the church, but to merge Spinozism with religion and the church, so that religion and church became more rational. By bringing Spinozism to the pulpit Van Hattem, and the Hattemists, help to disseminate Spinozism among the less educated.

Spinozism was also disseminated by the Freemasons. Since any reference to Spinoza's name, works, and thought were banned from public life in the Republic under the Anti-Socinian Act of 1653, it seems that the only way of discussing Spinozism, at least until the ban was lifted, was in secret societies. In this light, Spinozism was widely discussed in Freemasonry lodges, and this fact helped the dissemination of Spinoza's ideas until such time when they could be publicly discussed. An interesting case has come to light recently regarding the Freemasons and Spinozism. Thissen (1996:117-134) notes that in the middle of the 19th century, Markus Polak founded the freemasons lodge *Post Nubila Lux*, which was not recognised by the het Grootoosten, i.e. the Dutch Federation of Lodges. Polak and his sympathisers wanted to institute a natural religion, and they believed that with the help of Spinoza's views, such a natural religion would eventually replace Christianity. Thissen's research shows that Spinozism was being taken up by some groups who firmly believed in it, to the extent that Spinozism could serve as the basis for a new religion which would replace Christianity. This shows the great length Spinozism had come, that is, in the 17th century Spinoza was vilified as an atheist and his works were banned, a hundred and fifty years later Spinozism was seen as providing the theoretical basis for a natural religion.

Thissen (1996:132-133) also reports an interesting case in the latter part of the 19th century, where Petrus Van Limburg Brouwer, a firm defender of Spinoza, attempted to show that Spinoza was not an atheist. Brouwer firmly denied that Spinozism subscribed to atheism by

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any given time, that is, God will be sick and healthy at the same time (cf. Pierre Bayle,

pointing out that the denial of a personal God, i.e. a transcendent God, and in favour of a pantheistic God, i.e. an immanent God, was as old as mankind itself. Brouwer based his defence of Spinozism by referring to Hinduism and Buddhism. This case shows that, by the end of the 19th century, Spinozism could be openly defended against the charge of atheism without fear of persecution; this would have been unheard of during the 17th and 18th centuries.

It is fair to say, then, that Spinoza's revolutionary ideas impinged a great deal in Dutch life. A vast amount of Anti-Spinozist literature appeared, many tried to merge it with Christianity or Judaism, and a few became Spinozists by taking Spinoza's thought to their hearts and minds. Thus, in the Netherlands, Spinozism became an issue for many philosophical groups and thinkers. By and large, most of these groups and thinkers were criticising and trying to undermine Spinoza's thought, but there were a few groups and thinkers who were taking up Spinozism favourably. It must be also noted that many of Spinoza's commentators and interpreters did not fully understand Spinoza's philosophical system, which yielded considerable misinterpretation and misunderstanding in the literature concerning Spinoza. Nevertheless, both anti and pro Spinozists helped in one way or another with the dissemination of Spinoza's ideas. I shall now examine Spinoza's reception in Germany.

SPINOZA'S RECEPTION IN GERMANY

As I have maintained above, the way in which Spinoza's ideas were received by the Dutch during the 17th and 18th century influenced the reception of Spinoza's ideas abroad. The last section has shown that i. by and large Spinoza's ideas were seen as a threat, but that some small groups

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Dictionnaire Historique et Critique, Rotterdam, 1720).

and people welcomed Spinoza's revolutionary ideas, and that ii. most of the literature written on Spinoza attempted to refute Spinoza's philosophical system, and iii. many of Spinoza's commentators did not fully understand his philosophical system. These three factors indeed influenced the reception of Spinoza abroad, not least in Germany. Schröder (1996:168) corroborates:

> in the academic and, more specifically, the philosophical sphere, the major effect of the circulation of the Dutch Spinozistic treatises in Germany was not favourable to the dissemination of Spinoza's thought. They rather hindered than promoted the philosophical Spinoza-reception in German.

Thus, the early reception of Spinoza's ideas in the German academic sphere was not very welcoming, and the large literature against Spinoza's philosophical system written by the early Dutch commentators and interpreters is a crucial factor in this unfavourable reception of Spinoza's thought by German academics.

Nevertheless, it must be also acknowledge that in Germany, just as in the Netherlands, some people welcomed Spinoza's ideas. Most of those who welcomed Spinoza's thought went underground and would not openly acknowledge that they were Spinozists. These were the so-called crypto-Spinozists. Others openly acknowledged that they were Spinozists, but these were only a few who put their academic careers and personal lives in danger for openly defending their Spinozism. Mathias Knutzen, Wilhem Stosch and Theodor Lau, were openly-Spinozists and were persecuted in one way or another for acknowledging their Spinozism during the late 17th century and first part of the 18th century.

It is also noteworthy that some people and groups were coming in contact with Spinoza's ideas through books which deliberately disguised their Spinozian content, such as works written by crypto-Spinozists. Many of these people and groups either took to or disagreed with those ideas without knowing that they were based on Spinoza's philosophical system.

Another interesting parallel between Spinoza's reception in the Netherlands and his reception in Germany is that some people tried to merge Spinoza's ideas with Christianity or Judaism. Johann Wachter maintained that Spinoza's thought draws heavily from the Jewish Kabala, and from this fact he attempted to reconcile Spinoza's thought with Christianity so that Spinozism could be respected just as the Kabala was. Wachter was charged with Spinozism and was only saved from persecution thanks to the patronage he enjoyed in Berlin.

This situation remained until the 1780s when the pantheism controversy first came into the open. Bell (1984:171) concluded that:

> although it has been shown that Spinoza's philosophy was an important issue throughout the 18th century, it will also be apparent that it is possible to speak of a Spinoza-renaissance in Germany in the 1780's mainly because the subject was brought fully into the open for the first time.

Since Spinoza was an infamous figure due to his vilification by his contemporaries, it seems that Spinoza's thought went underground, but it never went away, and it re-emerged from its furtive status in the 1780s when the pantheism controversy broke out. The pantheism controversy was triggered when Lessing, who was one of the major figures of the German Enlightenment movement, confessed to Jacobi that he was a Spinozist. After Lessing's death, Jacobi brought

this matter into the public sphere, but not before a fiery exchange of correspondence with Mendelssohn, who thought of himself as the heir of Lessing's position. The controversy culminated with the publication of works by both Mendelssohn and Jacobi. Mendelssohn published Morgenstuden oder Vorlesungen über das Daseyn Gottes (Morning Hours or Lectures on the Existence of God) in 1785, and An die Freunde Lessing's (to Lessing's Friends) in 1786, and Jacobi Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn (Letters to Mr Moses Mendelssohn on the Doctrine of Spinoza) in 1785, and Wider Mendelssohns Beschuldigungen betreffend die Briefe über die Lehre des Spinoza (Reply to Mendelssohn's Accusations Concerning the Letters on the Doctrine of Spinoza) in 1786. Jacobi, sympathetic to the Romantic movement, aimed to question the Enlightenment movement's rationalism and naturalism, since he understood that any philosophical system based on these two tenets can only end up in Spinozism, where Spinozism represents atheism and materialism; Mendelssohn, a member of the Enlightenment movement, on the contrary tries to build on a sort of Spinozism which did not lead to the serious consequences implied by Jacobi's reading of Spinoza's philosophy. Both Jacobi and Mendelssohn agreed that reason alone cannot be the chief basis for metaphysical enquiry and that something extra was needed if one was to avoid Spinozism. For Jacobi an act of faith and sentiment, or a *salto mortale* as he puts it, was needed to avoid Spinozism and enable metaphysical enquiry. Mendelssohn, on the contrary, argued in favour of common sense as the extra component which could avoid the atheism and pantheism and enable metaphysical enquiry.

The pantheism controversy had a profound effect on the history of philosophy and this effect is not often recognised by philosophers. Beiser (1987:47-48) argues that the pantheism controversy has three distinct layers, as follows:

> It has an outer shell, the biographical issue of Lessing's Spinozism; an inner layer the exegetical question of the proper interpretation of Spinoza; and a hidden inner core the problem of the authority of reason...We have paid a heavy price for our ignorance of the pantheism controversy. We have lost our philosophical orientation in dealing with the speculative systems of post-Kantian philosophy. In no small measure these systems grew up as a response to the fundamental problem raised by the pantheism controversy. What Fichte, Schelling and Hegel were trying to do was to preserve the authority of reason in the face of Jacobi's provocative criticism.

This third point is extremely important, and I note that in order for one to understand why reason was being challenged by i. Jacobi's faith and sentiment, and ii. Mendelssohn's common sense, as the chief basis for metaphysical philosophical enquiry, one must understand the zeitgeist of that period, this being so, I shall put the pantheism controversy aside now. It can be said that in the 18th century there were two major movements. One was the Enlightenment movement, and on the other the Romantic movement, and I shall provide the reader with some brief definitions for these two movements now. After I have done this I shall come back to the pantheism controversy.

CHAPTER 2

THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND ITS ADVERSARIES

THE ENLIGHTENMENT MOVEMENT

Enlightenment, and its equivalent in other European languages, refers to an intellectual movement that had its dawn in 17th century England, with Locke and the deists. This movement soon spread virtually everywhere in Europe, and France became a major centre for its development thanks to the efforts of the *philosophes*, such as Voltaire, Diderot and other Encyclopaedists. It must be noted that Germany did not participate in the early development of the movement due to its largely feudal socio-political structures, which were not very favourable to change and new ideas. Moreover, when the movement finally started to develop in Germany, it became intertwined with rationalism, especially in the figures of Leibniz and Wolff. This fact was in direct contrast to the movement in the British Isles, which was directly interlinked with empiricism in the figure of thinkers like Hume, Reid, and Butler, to name just a few. Thus, the so-called Leibniz-Wolffian philosophy came to dominate German intellectual life during the Enlightenment era. This school received Spinoza's thought unfavourably, since it, by and large, followed Leibniz's meticulous rejection of Spinoza's system, which was roughly based on Bayle's rejection, and which only favoured his (Leibniz's) own system. The Leibniz-Wolffian school rejected monism and favoured a pluralism of substances, and concluded that the former system, Spinoza's system, can only lead to fatalism and the destruction of religion, freedom and morality.

In this light, the Enlightenment era, or the Age of Reason as it is sometimes referred to, was a far from homogenous movement, being more like an association of intellectuals who draw their inspirations from the achievements of the scientific revolution during the 16th and 17th century, and who shared a common approach towards the development of mankind, rather than subscribing to a particular single belief system. This common approach is the authority of reason, that is, the members of the movement praised rational criticism, they held that everything had to undergo the tribunal of reason, where reason is the sole judge, prosecutor, defence lawyer and jury. Thus, the Enlightenment movement could be defined as being a philosophical movement, which i. preached against metaphysical enquiry and revealed religion because these are beyond the realm of reason, ii. aimed to reform socio-political institutions so that these would conform to the principles of reason, and iii. defended the view that tolerance should be extended to different creeds and ways of life because rationally leads to the betterment of human relations. Thus, it could be said that the Enlightenment movement was a socio-political movement, which attempted i. the betterment of society as a whole, ii. the betterment of the individual per se, and iii. the betterment of human relations; the basis and catalyst for improvement in all these areas being reason and reason alone. Corroborating this is Zac (1990:255): "il ne s'agit pas seulement de l'amelioration de l'individu et de ses relations avec autrui, mais aussi des reformes, s'accordant avec raison, la religion, l'Etat, le droit, la science et la litérature".

The other great influence, apparent among many members of the movement, was naturalism. Beiser (1987:10-11) notes that 'the Enlightenment faith in reason rested last but not least upon naturalism, the belief that reason could, if only in principle, explain everything in nature'. The movement's reliance on rational criticism rested heavily on naturalism, because the movement understood that reason could, eventually, explain everything in Nature, i.e. they

understood Nature as a self-contained and self-explanatory system. To many members of the movement everything in Nature could eventually be explained by a mathematical system of laws, which could be inferred and discovered by the powers of reason. The many advances made by the sciences of the time supported this core belief of the movement, e.g. the discovery of the law of gravity by Newton; and moreover, many of these discoveries could be cross-linked, such as, the fall of an apple, the ebb and flow of tides and the orbit of planets around the sun, could all be explained by a particular universal law, Newton's law of gravity.

The above mentioned characterisation fits well with the movement, but it must be noted that at the beginning of the 18th century the movement took a more moderate approach towards revealed religion, only later in the century did it become more radical. That is, the movement, at the beginning of the 18th century was more moderate as it was anti-religious only insofar as Theism was concerned, and thus, many members of the movement still embraced Deism, such as Voltaire, Diderot and Wolff, because they held the view that true religion is natural religion, and thus, they dismissed Theism or revealed religion as mere fiction. In the middle of the 18th century this situation changed and became more radical as Beiser (1987:59) notes:

> theism was suffering at the hands of sciences. Two of the cardinal tenets of theism, the belief in miracles and the authority of the Bible, were looking less and less plausible. Modern physics had become status quo and its picture of the necessary order of nature cast doubt upon the possibility of miracles...The bible seemed to be no longer the product of supernatural inspiration, but of man himself writing under specific historical and cultural circumstances. Although deism seemed to be consistent with modern physics and biblical criticism, it too began to

> decline deism was the victim of philosophical criticism. The mainstays of deism were the ontological and cosmological arguments. But these arguments had become discredited by the 1780s. Hume's *Dialogues*...Butler's *Analogy of Religion*...had severely damaged the cosmological argument, while Kant's *Kritik* appeared to provide the fatal exposé of the ontological argument.

Hence, at first the Enlightenment movement was only anti-theist, but it soon became partially anti-deist. That is, at first the Enlightenment movement was only anti revealed religion, still accepting the possibility of some sort of creator, i.e. a personal and transcendent God. By the middle of the 18th century, however, many members of the movement also became suspicious of natural religion since rational criticism caused some damage to the various versions of the ontological and cosmological argument; but, just as many still held on to Deism by subscribing to the views of the design argument, since the analogy of a clockmaker fitted well with the mechanical universe views of the movement, and not many people in the 18th century were prepared to declare themselves to be atheists. Another point which must be made here is that many in the movement were anti-religious, because religion was seen by many as preventing mankind from implementing changes required by reason, and thus hindering progress. Many in the movement held a moral objection to religion because they understood that religion prevented mankind from focusing on the principles, such as the principle of utility, which were being provided by reason, and thus preventing mankind's improvement. Among those who held such views is Bentham (1982:121), I quote:

> The dictates of religion are in all places intermixed more or less with dictates unconformable to those of utility, deduced from texts, well or ill interpreted, of the writings held sacred by each sect: unconformable, by imposing practices sometimes inconvenient to a man's self, sometimes pernicious to the rest of the community.

It must also be acknowledge, however, that Bentham (1982:121) was also optimistic, and he thought that religion would eventually catch up with things and thus becoming compatible with the principle of utility, I quote:

> Happily, the dictates of religion seem to approach nearer and nearer to a coincidence with those of utility every day. Because the dictates of the moral sanction do so: and those coincide with or are influenced by these. Men of the worst religions, influenced by the voice and practice of the surrounding world, borrow continually a new leaf out of the book of utility: and with these, in order not to break with their religion, they endeavour, sometimes with violence enough, to patch together and adorn the repositories of their faith

Needless to say, the movement's more radical atheists, such as d'Holbach, were very hostile towards religion. Many atheists understood religion not just as a power that prevented mankind's progress because it obstructed the powers of reason, but also as the very source of discrepancies in society. I quote an interesting passage from d'Holbach (1990:280):

> Concluons donc que la Théologie et ses notions, bien loin d'être utiles au genre-humain, sont les vraies sources des maux qui affligent la terre, des erreurs qui l'aveglent, des préjugés qui l'engourdissent, de l'ignorance qui la rend crédule, des vices qui la tourmente, des gouvernements qui l'oprime. Concluons, que les idées surnaturelles et divines qu'on nous inspire des l'énfance, sont les vraies causes de notre déraison habituelle, de nos querelles religieuses, de nos dissensions sacrées, de nos persécutions humaines.

I must stress that there were some regional differences in the way the movement approached religion, revealed or natural, as a whole. By and large the French were the foremost atheists by the end of the 18th century, whilst the Germans held on to deism dearly mainly due to the feudal socio-political structures which were in place in Germany at the time. Germany was divided into a number of small principalities that were governed by Lutheran absolute monarchs; these monarchs did not favour changes and regarded the established status quo as being the political and religious ideal. I shall come back to this point later in this section. The decline of theism and deism only favoured Spinozism too well. Spinoza's pantheism, and its conception of an immanent God or Nature, seemed to be able to stand its ground against naturalism and rational criticism. Moreover, Spinozism seemed to be the natural consequence of naturalism and rational criticism and thus it was embraced, openly or disguised, by many members of the Enlightenment movement. Spinoza's biblical criticism in the Tractatus and the naturalism of the Ethics seemed to some philosophers of the Enlightenment movement as representing the very dictums that modern science was putting forward. Spinoza's determinism, his denials of a personal and transcendent God, his rejection of the notion of providence were all thought of as being a natural

consequence of modern science. For many members of the movement Spinoza's pantheism seemed to be a good solution, the middle way between pure theism and deism on one side and extreme materialism and atheism on the other side.

Towards the end of the 18th century the Enlightenment faced a major crisis. As I mentioned above, the Enlightenment movement praised rational criticism and naturalism. It praised rational criticism because of its power to examine and explain the world around us, and naturalism because its members understood Nature to be a self-contained and self-explanatory system. Both rational criticism and naturalism had to be radicalised because to put a limit on these would be a form of unreason or dogmatism. The radicalisation of these two tenets led the Enlightenment movement to a crisis. Beiser (2000:20-21) notes that rational criticism when radicalised leads to scepticism, for when one examines one's own beliefs one discovers that the evidence supporting these same beliefs can go either way. Naturalism when radicalised leads to materialism, for if Nature is a self-explanatory system why presuppose that there is anything other than matter. Moreover, rational criticism and naturalism undermine each other. If rational criticism ends in scepticism then it undermines naturalism, which is committed to the independent reality of Nature and the necessity of scientific laws. For since one has no reason to believe one's own evidence then one has no reason to believe the necessity of scientific laws. If naturalism ends in materialism, then it undermines rational criticism because materialism ends in relativism since it maintains that everything, including human rationality, is the product of material forces at a specific time and space. Therefore there is no universal necessity, and this undermines rational criticism since rational criticism aims to discover universal truths. Fundamentally, those two tenets of the Enlightenment were leading it to extreme materialism and

atheism as well as undermining any possible metaphysical enquiry, and by no means were all philosophers in the 18th century prepared to live with those two consequences.

Ameriks (2000:5) notes that the crisis in the movement also leads to a crisis in morality. On the one hand, achievements in the sciences, specially the advent of Newtonian Physics, entailed a deterministic universe where the three most basic claims of traditional philosophy, viz. the existence of God, freewill, and the immortality of the soul, became irrelevant. On the other hand, morality and its understanding that human beings have freewill, that human beings are equal and that we are practical beings seemed to require those very claims which were being undermined by data coming from the sciences, thus, the crisis in morality.

The above characterisation of the Enlightenment, however, is not totally true of the Aufklärung, the German Enlightenment. The German Enlightenment had a distinct feature that differentiated it from other European Enlightenment movements, as noted by Beck (1993:6):

> The German Enlightenment took place in a feudal environment of scores of small absolute monarchies in which Lutheran passive obedience and the eye of the local monarch ensured that the established order of things was regarded with sacred awe by the Burger. While the philosophes of France were not merely anti-clerical but also anti-religious (materialists, atheists, free thinkers, sceptics), what was unique to German Enlightenment was that it originally had a profoundly religious motive.

Thus, it could be said that the German Enlightenment was aimed at the reform of socio-political institutions and the betterment of mankind and human relations following the principles of

reason, but that it was not anti-religious, and thus, not totally anti-metaphysical since it was never entirely suspicious of theism and or deism. This peculiarity of the German Enlightenment movement, namely its religious motive, forced this movement's members to try to merge rational criticism and naturalism with religion. This turned out to be a very difficult, perhaps impossible, task. This religious motive of the German Enlightenment only added to the crisis in the movement. The Aufklärer searched for possible responses and ways by which the crisis could be avoided, and the religious motive maintained. The Aufklärer had to try to keep rational criticism and naturalism as the central tenets of the movement and at the same time merge these with his own religious convictions - the conciliation of these factors proved to be a conundrum. Many Aufklärer, such as Wolff, embraced deism; others, such as Mendelssohn, kept true to their religion and thus were theists. Clinging to theism or deism must have proved very difficult, as these had to be defended against rational criticism and naturalism. Thus, whereas the Enlightenment philosophers in other European countries were able to embrace Spinozism as the middle way between theism and deism on one side and materialism and atheism on the other side, many Aufklärer were unable to embrace Spinozism as an option due to their theism or deism. The only option open to these Aufklärer was to try to read (or misread) Spinozism in such a way that it would neither conflict with their theism or deism nor undermine the powers or rational criticism and naturalism. Needless to say these Aufklärer were largely unsuccessful in their venture. Fortunately, some Aufklärer chose to embrace Spinozism secretly, i.e. the crypto-Spinozists, of whom Lessing is probably the best example; others defied the situation in Germany and openly acknowledge that they were Spinozists, i.e. the open-Spinozists. These crypto and open Spinozists only truly came into the battleground when the pantheism controversy broke out, and the Spinozist solution to the crisis could no longer be ignored. In this

light, the German scenario during the later part of the 18th century is divided into four groups, namely, i. the Aufklärer who were anti-Spinozist because of their theism or deism, ii. the Aufklärer who were a crypto-Spinozist, iii. the Aufklärer who were openly Spinozist, and iv. the Romantics. The first three have been dealt with during the unfolding of this chapter. I now turn to the Romantics.

THE ROMANTIC MOVEMENT

It is quite difficult, and perhaps fruitless, to try to define Romanticism. It could be said that Romanticism is more like a mood and not a well-organised or structured philosophical movement. The romantic can be seen as revolutionary or as reactionary depending on one's own standpoint, and this is the very reason why it is so difficult to try to pin Romanticism down to any possible philosophical or political view, no matter how many times this has been attempted. There are, however, some common features that are shared by all Romantics. Quinton (1993:778) has described these features extremely well, as follows:

> The Romantic favours the concrete over the abstract, variety over uniformity, the infinite over the finite, nature over culture, convention and artifice, the organic over the mechanical, freedom over constraint, rules and limitations. In human terms it prefers the unique individual to the average man, the free creative genius to the prudent man of good sense, the particular community or nation to humanity at large.

In his The Roots of Romanticism, Berlin (1999:8-9) maintains that to say that someone is a romantic is to say that:

> the values to which they attached the highest importance were such values as integrity, sincerity, readiness to sacrifice one's life to some inner light, dedication to some ideal for which it is worth sacrificing all that one is, for which it is worth both living and dying. You would have found that they were not primarily interested in knowledge, or in the advance of science, nor interested in political power, not interested in happiness, not interested, above all, in adjustment to life, in finding your place in society, in living at peace with your government, even in loyalty to your king or to the republic.

The Romantic movement was a backlash against the Enlightenment movement. The Romantic saw the Enlightenment movement as trying to standardise everything according to rational principles, and this standardisation was seen as a sort of dictatorship of reason. The Romantic philosopher felt that the standardisation of everything according to reason was somehow doing away with particular things and the richness of cultural enterprise that comes with variety. Thus, the Romantic felt that the individual man or group was worth fighting for; he praised the particular and the unique, rejecting the standardised and the average. The Romantic did not attempt to do away with reason, but to somehow diminish its dictatorial powers and perhaps to put limits to it. Furthermore, the Romantic attempted to show that sentiment, faith and emotions are important features of life as well as of social-political structures.

It is noteworthy that the Romantic movement understood the Enlightenment movement as being too pretentious in its claim that it represented the highest point in human history and progress. The Romantic objected to this claim on the ground that reason served to standardise things, and this standardisation of things was understood by the Romantic as a sort of downgrading, since it stopped i. individuals in their effort to become unique individuals, heroes as it were, ii. nations and cultures in their effort to remain independent and pure, and iii. mankind in its effort to progress, since without heroes and cultural richness there could be no progress but only stagnation. Furthermore, for the Romantic, reason was corrupting mankind, rather than bettering it, exactly because reason, as the Enlightenment envisaged it, left no room for faith, emotion and sentiment, and the Romantic at any rate considered these as being just as important as reason.

Another point to be made regarding the Romantic movement is that it aimed to undermine the Enlightenment notion that all great questions posed by mankind - such as: 'how to live the good life? ', 'what is the good? ', 'what is right? ', 'what is beautiful? ', 'how to act? ', and so on - have objective and valid answers which can be obtained by the use of reasoning. The more ambitious members of the Enlightenment movement understood that a rational system could be devised so that all these questions could be answered, and that these answers could be stated in the form of propositions, and if all these propositions were true then the whole system would be sound. Thus, the Enlightenment movement held an external notion of truth, it aimed to answer all great questions by matching the answers of those questions to some external entity, and this matching was to be achieved through reasoning. According to some commentators, such as Berlin, the Romantic, on the contrary, held a more internalist notion of truth, it held that there are no external entities out there to which the answer to the great questions of mankind

could be matched. The Romantic thought that truth is particular to individuals, communities, nations and periods of time, and hence it is senseless to try to universalise the answer to those questions. I quote Berlin (1999:63):

> If the value of every culture resides in what that particular culture seeks after, as he says (Herder), every culture has its own centre of gravity...you must determine what this centre of gravity, the *Schwerpunkt*, as he calls it, is before you can understand what these men were about; it is no use judging these things from the point of view of some other century or some other culture.

Therefore, the Romantic movement can be said to have three central tenets, viz. i. an internalist notion of truth, ii. it favoured the individual as a particular entity, over the standardised man, and iii. it cared for communities in their uniqueness of cultural richness, over the idea of one single culture as being proper.

The German Romantic movement, just as the German Enlightenment movement, had also a strong religious motive, drawing much of its inspiration from German Pietism. The Pietists were an evangelical Lutheran movement, which first appeared in Germany at the end of the 17th century. It emerged as a reaction against all sorts of Protestant dogmatism, believing that "since the Lutheran Church had become part of the state, it had developed an authoritarian structure of its own, and had thus become a form of dogmatism and elitism no better than the Roman Catholic Church", as noted by Beiser (1987:51). Pietism defended views, such as the universal priesthood of believers, freedom of conscience and the necessity of an immediate relationship with God and it is this latter belief that is most important here since it understands

that religion, as the relationship with the creator, is to be understood as an inner rather than an outer connection with God. That is, Pietism favoured a form of religiousness which defended an inner, sentimental and emotional relationship with God rather than an outward, formal and ritualistic liaison with the creator. Gardner (1999:8) notes that "Pietism had...anticipated the crisis into which the Enlightenment would lead religion, and it lay ready with a solution: the independence of religion from reason", and thus, it is easy to see why many Romantics, such as Hamann, Herder and Jacobi, draw constantly from Pietism. It must be acknowledged here that the Pietism also influenced some Aufklärer, such as Kant who was brought up as a Pietist. Moreover, since Pietism was one of the major religious movements in Germany it is most certain that all Aufklärer were well familiar with it and its criticisms of reason, even if only in the form of the arguments which were put forward by people like Jacobi, Herder and Hamann.

At this point it is worth mentioning Herder. Herder is very important for the development of German Romanticism, as he is a central figure in the transition period between the Enlightenment and the Romantic movement, and as such, he was a fierce critic of the Enlightenments' position, I quote a passage from Herder's "Yet Another Philosophy of History": "How strange that anyone in the world should find it hard to understand that light does not nourish men, that order and opulence and so-called free thought can be neither the happiness nor the destiny of everyone. [Herder (1969:193)]"

Herder rejected any form of rational system and was particularly attracted to the idea of the existence of supernatural or divine entities, such as the immortal soul in psychology, the divine origin of language, and the concept of providence in history. He was particularly interested in the philosophy of language, holding the view that all languages descend from a single common source. He also claimed that a people's thought and culture could only be truly

understood through its own language. For Herder it is not blood or race that binds a nation together; rather, it is language and all the nuances in this very language that binds a community together. Herder understood that it is hopeless to try to universalise the way that people live and lead their lives, as the Enlightenment movement tried to do, because the way a community lives, its laws, institutions, music, arts, can only be truly understood through its language. What Herder tried to demonstrate with this is that there is no single right answer to those great questions of mankind, that is, each *Volk* will find its own answers. In other words, Herder's views were a direct attack on the powers of reason, because since he understood that there is no single answer to those great questions posed by the movement, then it is hopeless for reason to try to find a universal answer, as this answer does not exist. For instance, what is true for the Greeks as an ideal, was not true for the Romans as an ideal, but this does not mean that the Romans were somehow mistaken, only that the Romans held a different kind of ideal. Different nations at different times held different ideals, there is no universal truth, this is the Romantic claim against the Enlightenment movement. The following passage of Herder's "National Genius and the Environment" encompasses this rather nicely: "...let justice be done to the other ways of life, which from the constitution of our Earth, have been destined,..., to contribute to the education of mankind [Herder (1968:57)]."

Furthermore, Herder in "Humanity the End of Human Nature" epitomises the Romantic movement because he did not only eulogize the individual but he also eulogizes communities, I quote Herder (1968:122): "a man is but a small part of the whole; and his history, like that of the grub, is intimately interwoven with that of the web he inhabits." That is, he did not only praise the unique man in his fight against the standardisation of mankind by reason, he also praised individual nations and cultures, as he understood that the uniqueness of things lies not only in the

individual but also in the communities of which such an individual is a member. Thus, for Herder, it was not only important that men became heroes rather than average human beings, but also that nations and cultures were safeguarded against the overpowering intrusion of other natures and cultures. It is not that Herder defended the view that nations and cultures had to exist in complete isolation, but that a nation or culture should not be subjugated, colonised, or even destroyed by other nations and cultures. Diversity, rather than standardisation was the norm in the Romantic movement.

Insofar as Spinozism is concerned, it must be said that the Romantic could be either a Spinozist or an anti-Spinozist. As I have maintained above, the Romantic movement was a response to the Enlightenment movement, and as such it had to deal with the crisis of those two tenets of the Enlightenment, namely, rational criticism and naturalism, and thus it also had to deal with the obvious consequence of those two tenets, Spinozism. The Aufklärer's attempt to solve the crisis was unsuccessful: they simply could not find a way of holding to those two tenets, and at the same time avoid the consequences of extreme materialism and scepticism. It is at this point that the Romantic appears in the scene. The Romantic understood the problems, which were being faced by the Aufklärung too well, and was perhaps better placed to try to find a solution to the crisis because the Romantic was willing to limit the powers of reason by bringing faith, emotion and sentiment into the equation. Spinozism was a matter that had to be reckoned with and its influence was felt in many quarters of the Romantic movement. Some Romantics, such as Jacobi, rejected Spinozism because they understood that Spinozism could only lead to materialism and atheism. Others, such as Herder, tried to deal with Spinozism by subscribing to only some of Spinoza's views, or by interpreting Spinoza's thought so that the threat of materialism and atheism could be averted. The truth is that virtually all Romantics tried

to deal with Spinozism in one way or another, and thus, Spinozism became one of the major influences of the German post-Kantian Idealism.

It is worth pointing out that Spinozism could have been very attractive to many Romantics since it advocates a very unorthodox understanding of Nature. Among other things it subscribes to the view that human life has no natural end, i.e. Spinozism does not subscribe to the idea of final causes. And thus, since according to Spinozism there is not a purposeful end for mankind as a whole, then, difference and diversity becomes a norm for mankind, which can be understood in cultural or historical terms. This feature of Spinozism ties in well with the Romantic understanding that there is no universal truth, and hence, each people will find its own answers to those great philosophical questions, as I noted above. I must also stress that some other features of Spinozism, such as its extreme determinism, may have been quite unappealing to some Romantics who thought freewill to be very important.

With this I conclude my characterisation of the Romantic movement and so I return to my earlier discussion of the pantheism controversy.

THE PANTHEISM CONTROVERSY

The pantheism controversy encapsulates all the components of the German Zeitgeist at the end of the 18th century. Lessing, an Aufklärer, represents the crypto-Spinozist; Mendelssohn, an anti-Spinozist, represents the Aufklärer who try to read Spinozism in an unthreatening way; Jacobi, the Romantic, represents those who tried to deal with the Enlightenment crisis by rejecting the supreme powers of reason. Mendelssohn's attempt to solve the Enlightenment crisis by virtue of a reading of Spinozism, which would not lead to extreme materialism and atheism, was

unconvincing since it was based on a number of preconceptions of Spinozism. Nevertheless, Mendelssohn's attempt can be said to be one of the last brave efforts by the Aufklärung to defend reason against all Romantic criticism. Jacobi had probably a better understanding of Spinoza's system than Mendelssohn, since it was not based on preconceptions, but on a very detailed and thorough presentation of Spinoza's thought. Jacobi concluded that Spinozism can only end up in extreme materialism and atheism, and this was unacceptable to him. Jacobi's conclusions were more than a mere attack on Spinozism, they were also a successful attack on the powers of reason, and this proved to be very damaging to the Enlightenment. Jacobi attacked reason as the chief tenet because he understood that reason was being too dictatorial and damaging to metaphysical enquiry. He held the view that reason had to be limited by faith and sentiment so that metaphysical enquiry could be enabled again. Hence, the main consequence of the pantheism controversy is that Spinoza could no more be dismissed by mere rhetoric, misinterpretations and misguided commentaries, rather, Spinoza had to be considered as a proper philosopher. All those who philosophised in Germany, Aufklärer or Romantic, after the pantheism controversy had to deal with Spinozism and its materialism and atheism.

Furthermore, in virtue of Jacobi's damaging attack on the powers of reason, all those who philosophised in Germany had to either accept Jacobi's views that reason had to be limited and that an act of faith is needed to enable metaphysical enquiry, which leads to dogmatism, or to reject it and try to re-establish reason as the sole chief power, which leads to scepticism; or to try to find a way by which reason is maintained as a chief tenet but that does not threaten metaphysics. This later path could be called the third way, a middle ground between dogmatism and scepticism, and this is the path chosen by philosophers like Kant and the Absolute Idealists, namely, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. In parts II and III of this thesis I shall demonstrate

respectively, how, in one way or another, Fichte and Schelling fell on Spinozism in their effort to try to solve the problems faced by the Critical Philosophy of Kant. But before doing that I must bring Kant into the scenario since he is the other major influence on the Absolute Idealists, and this is a fact that is a well-accepted and well-acknowledged in philosophical literature. The following chapter, entitled Kant, will give an overview of Kantian philosophy, and the reception of Kant's views by his peers. This is an important chapter as it sets the foreground for the development of Fichte's and Schelling's views.

CHAPTER 3

KANT'S SOLUTION TO THE ENLIGHTENMENT CRISIS

Generally speaking, Kant is considered as one of the foremost members of the Aufklärung, but it is also interesting to note that sometimes Kant can sound like a typical Romantic. Corroborating this is Cooper (1996:296):

> ...Kant often sounds like a typical Aufklärer in his insistence on a universal morality, for example, or his preference for a Republican enlightened despotism. But elsewhere, he writes more in the romantic spirit. As the title of his greatest work suggests (Critique of Pure Reason), he rejects extravagant claims made on behalf of reason...

Kant is probably the first Aufklärer to take the Romantic's criticism of the Enlightenment seriously, and this was perhaps so partly due to his background as a Pietist. I note that although Kant sometimes writes as an Aufklärer and at other times as a Romantic, it is important to bear in mind that, by and large, Kant's philosophy remained true to the Enlightenment ideals since it advocated uncompromising philosophical criticism as it endeavoured to disclose the powers and the limits of reason itself.

The first edition of the *First* Critique came out roughly at the same time as Jacobi and Mendelssohn started their correspondence regarding Lessing's Spinozism; and the second edition appeared roughly when the pantheism controversy became public with the publication of books

by Jacobi and Mendelssohn. Kant's main motivation for the publication of this work was to try to establish the possibility of metaphysical enquiry, which was being undermined by the crisis in the Enlightenment movement. That is to say, the aim of the *First* Critique was to enquire into the possibility of metaphysical knowledge, and thus, the Critique aimed to answer the question: is metaphysics possible? If so, how? Gardner (1999:22) notes that these questions must be understood correctly so that further confusion is avoided. The fate of dogmatic metaphysics, that sort of metaphysics which claims to have knowledge of a Deity, of souls and of immortality, the sort of metaphysics promised by the Wolff-Leibniz school, the metaphysics that purports knowledge of the things-in-themselves, is still to be decided during the unfolding of the Critique. But the sort of metaphysics, which is required by rationality and morality, the metaphysics that make claims about substance and causation is not open to doubt by Kant, as it is for Hume. Thus, the question for Kant regarding this type of metaphysics is not whether it is possible or not, but how is it possible? The term 'metaphysics' in the introduction of the Critique refers to both the old metaphysics, which is being rejected by Kant, and to the new metaphysics, which is being defended by Kant, and this can be quite confusing to his readers. What he tries to demonstrate in the Critique is that his philosophical system is bringing the old type of metaphysics, i.e. dogmatic metaphysics, to its end, and at the same time reformulating a new one, i.e. a metaphysics that enquires into the conditions of rationality, experience and morality.[4]

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[4] NB. Bubner (1997:xi-xvi) makes an interesting point in his book German Idealist Philosophy. He traces the study of metaphysics back to the Greek Ancient philosophers and establishes that, then, metaphysical enquiry was an enquiry into the nature of Reality. That is to say, that metaphysical enquiry was a study into Being, i.e. a study that aimed to establish knowledge of what really exists, why it exists and the way it exists. It is only later, with the rise of Christianity and the Scholastics, that the nature of metaphysical enquiry shifts into an enquiry about knowledge of the Deity, the soul and immortality. It is this later kind of metaphysical enquiry that Kant is rejecting. Bubner argues that Kant is trying to re-establish metaphysics as an enquiry into the nature of reality, but as a study of rationality, morality and experience, rather

It must be stressed here that in reformulating metaphysics Kant does not give up on that classical philosophical dictum that stresses that all philosophy must be systematic, that is to say, that Kant as his predecessors, as well as many philosophers after him, subscribed to the view that philosophy should start from one single simple and foundational principle, from which a whole system could be derived. Corroborating this is the fact that at the end of the Critique, Kant says that whatever path one chooses to trail in this field one has "the obligation of proceeding systematically" (A 855/B 883). Nor does he give up on his understanding that philosophy has to be critical. The systematisation of philosophy has to be done through a prior painstaking examination of one's cognitive powers (thus, the title Critique of Pure Reason), whereas non-critical philosophy only assumes the systematisation, stating its premises dogmatically:

> ...reason should take on a new and most difficult of all its tasks, namely, that of self-knowledge,.., by which reason may secure its rightful claims while dismissing all its groundless pretensions, and this not by mere decrees, but according to its own eternal and unchangeable laws; and this court is none other than the critique of pure reason... (A XI/AXII)

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than a study into Being. Moreover, the idealist element of the German philosophical movement of this period (Kant to Hegel) is very important because, as Bubner (1997:xvi) says: "The Gap between consciousness to this model seemed to provide a systematic way to realize philosophy as the supreme science, particularly by taking reflection on the self seriously. Ideas allow the construction of a world, once the self-certainty of consciousness is adequately understood. In this sense, the old (ancient Greek) claim of metaphysics is restored (i.e. a study of knowledge of Reality), but the old (ancient Greek) form of metaphysics was surpassed (a study of rationality, experience and morality rather than a study of Being). This is what shaped the idealistic character of philosophy from Kant to Hegel." [my brackets].

Whether or not Kant was successful in formulating a properly critical system is not at stake at this point, and I shall come back to this during the unfolding of this thesis.

It is also important to note that many commentators fail to acknowledge the fact that, on a broader sense, Kant was not merely trying to enable metaphysical enquiry, but to the same extent, he was also trying to maintain the indispensability of reason as a chief tenet. Kant was well aware of the difficulties faced by the Enlightenment and thus, with the publication of the Critique, he was attempting to rescue reason from the harsh criticism which it was suffering from all quarters, and re-establish its powers, as well as its limits. It is true to say that Kant was answering the question: 'is metaphysics possible? if so, how?' But it is also true to say that in order for him to answer this question he had to answer some more primary questions, questions such as: 'How is experience possible?', 'How can knowledge be attained?', 'and what can I know?' By demonstrating how human experience of reality is possible, Kant was able to demonstrate how knowledge of this reality could be attained and what could be known of reality. Once these questions were answered Kant was also able to demonstrate what kind of metaphysics was possible and how it was possible to investigate it. During the unfolding of this chapter I shall demonstrate how Kant answered these questions and at what costs.

But before proceeding I note that it is imperative to provide the reader with some characterisation of what Kant means by reason, and I note that the better way to provide this is to contrast the German words *Vernunft* and *Verstand.* The original German title of the Critique is Kritik der reinen Vernunft, and thus, when Kant attempted to rescue reason, he has in mind reason as *Vernunft*, the power or faculty of reason that human beings possess. In direct contrast with this is the German word *Verstand*, reason as argumentation or as applied judgement, i.e. *Verstand* is the word used by Kant to describe the very source of conceptualisation during one's

experiences, which is commonly translated in English as understanding. Hence, in the original German, there is a contrast between reason in a narrower sense, i.e. *Verstand*, or reason as argumentation, and reason in a wider sense, i.e. *Vernunft*, or reason as the capacity or faculty that human being possess.

Let us now look at the Critique in some detail. The Critique could be read as being the third way between rationalism and empiricism. In (A 471/B 499) Kant introduces this theme by referring to the empiricist Epicurus and the rationalist Plato. Later this theme extends to the rationalism of Descartes and Leibniz and the empiricism of Locke and Hume, or as Kant says: "with regard to the object of all our rational cognitions, some are merely sensual philosophers, others merely intellectual philosophers." (A 853 /B 881) That said, Kant maintains that the Critique is supposed to be the middle ground between these two distinct philosophical schools, and as such, it is supposed to avert their shortcomings. According to this interpretation, i.e. that the Critique is the third way, Kant is siding with the empiricist in rejecting the rationalist view that knowledge of reality can be inferred from concepts alone, and that no external perceptual experience is needed. That is to say, Kant rejects the rationalist view because he understands that knowledge inferred from concepts alone apply only to analytical judgements, i.e. those judgements in which the subject encompasses the predicate, e.g. bachelors are unmarried men, and these are insufficient to give us an encompassing picture of reality. But Kant will also side with the rationalist and reject the empiricist view that knowledge of the external world can be solely derived from unconceptualised perceptual experience, since he tries to demonstrate that perceptual "experience is itself a species of knowledge that involves understanding" (B XVII), where understanding is to be interpreted as conceptualisation. For Kant both sensibility, the capacity to receive intuitions, and understanding, the capacity to form judgments using those

intuitions are crucial in our attaining knowledge. In A 51 Kant writes "thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind". This reading is to a certain extent correct, but it can also be said to be an oversimplification of the whole scenario.[5]

By looking further in the Critique, one can reach the conclusion that Kant's real targets are scepticism and dogmatism, as suggested by Guyer (1998:20) and Cooper (1996:297-298). According to this reading, in writing the Critique, Kant tries to solve the dispute over metaphysical enquiry between those two extremes positions, namely, the dogmatic and the sceptical. The battle ground between scepticism and dogmatism is really over the possibility of what Kant calls synthetic a priori truths, i.e. truths which are not derived from experience but are still informative about reality, e.g. every event has a cause, since the concept of event does not encompass the concept of cause, yet according to some philosophers, such as Kant, these truths can be known prior to experience. Interesting to note here is the fact that Kant regarded Mathematics and Geometry as synthetic a priori truths. Scepticism holds the view that

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[5] NB. This is the standard reading of Kant's philosophy, the reading where sensibility and understanding play an equal part on human experience. There is substantial textual evidence for this reading as A51/B75 for instance demonstrates. There is, however, a less well-know reading of the *First* Critique which is found in the works of Adorno. In his Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* Adorno reads Kant as a Rationalist, that is, the understanding takes priority over sensibility which is seen as being only instrumental for the understanding, sensibility is the understanding's window into the world. According to Adorno this reading avoids the problem of interaction between sensibility and understanding, a criticism which was first raised by Maimon (see below pp. 67-68). The following passage is enlightening: "...to put the matter rather crassly, the Transcendental Aesthetic - that is to say, the theory of intuition, of pure intuitions - depends on logic. It is a mere illusion of the *Critique of Pure Reason* that logic is erected on the foundation of the Transcendental Aesthetic. That is really the schoolmasterly notion that priority belongs to the pure forms into which contents, the affects, then flow - and these are followed in turn by the understanding which processes and shapes it all. This is indeed how I presented it to you at the outset because that is what the primer tells us to do, but of course this approach does no justice at all to the actual structure of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. I believe that now you have reached the point where you understand that the structure of this Transcendental Aesthetic is a function of logic and that what I am attempting to do is to resolve the aporia between intuitions and logic...".

knowledge derives from one's sense experience and that one's sense experience can only provide one with individual and contingent items of information. The sceptic cannot accept any claim regarding universal and necessary truths which are not analytic a priori, i.e. truths which can be known prior to experience and in which the predicate is implied by the subject, e.g. every effect has a cause. That is, the sceptic cannot accept what Kant calls synthetic a priori truths because these are not grounded in sense experience, yet these truths claim to provide information about reality. Dogmatism, on the contrary, allows for synthetic a priori truths, but since this kind of knowledge is not grounded on sense experience, it tries to ground these truths as either a special metaphysical insight into the nature of reality or as innate knowledge planted in us by God. Needless to say that both the former and the later are unacceptable to Scepticism, since there is no way of verifying their veracity. This reading ties in well with the zeitgeist of that time. On the one hand, one has scepticism as the outcome of the crisis in the Enlightenment, which undermined dogmatic metaphysics as well as the metaphysics required by rationality and morality, as I have mentioned in previously in chapter 2; and on the other hand, one has the dogmatic attitude of many Romantics, such as Jacobi, as well as the dogmatic attitude of the enlightened Wolff-Leibniz school towards metaphysics. The former maintained that metaphysical claims are not undermined by the powers of reason because metaphysics goes beyond these powers, and thus metaphysical claims should be accepted *in faith*, whilst the latter promised to provide knowledge of entities such as souls, immortality and God, which was seen as unachievable.

One can find evidence of Kant's aims in the Critique in the very first pages. There Kant tells us that "there was a time when metaphysics was called the queen of sciences...now in accordance with the fashion of the age, the queen proves despised on all sides." (AVIII). This

short passage clearly shows Kant's concern with the then current status of metaphysics. Metaphysics was suffering under the hammer of those two Enlightenment tenets, viz, rational criticism and naturalism, as I explained in the previous chapter, and thus, metaphysics became a much disputed arena where sceptics and dogmatists fought for their views. Needless to say that neither of them was getting anywhere, or as Kant puts it:

> In the beginning, under the administration of the dogmatics, her (metaphysics) rule was despotic. Yet because her legislation still retained traces of ancient barbarism, this rule gradually degenerated through internal wars into complete anarchy; and the sceptics, a kind of nomad who abhor all permanent cultivation of the soil, shattered civil unity from time to time. (A IX)

The publication of the Critique aimed to solve the dispute between sceptics such as Hume, and dogmatists such as Leibniz, Wolff and Jacobi, and thus enabling metaphysical enquiry by attempting to devise a system i. in which rational criticism would not lead to scepticism, i.e. a system in which rational criticism is resistant to Cartesian and Humean doubts, and ii. a system which provides a naturalism that does not end up in materialism, i.e. everything in Nature is explicable by mechanical laws but there is more than merely matter. Nature is a self-contained system but this does not mean that Nature is all that there is. Furthermore, in this philosophical system, rational criticism and naturalism would not pose a threat to each other, that is, Kant had to devise a system in which i. rational criticism does not undermine naturalism, i.e. a system in which reason is an autonomous faculty and a source of universal laws, but also a system in which reason is independent of causality; and ii. naturalism does not undermine rational criticism, that

is, laws of Physics apply to Nature itself and do not simply consist in our habit of association. Moreover, Kant also aimed to solve the crisis in morality by attempting to solve the conflict between the sciences and those three basic claims of traditional philosophy, viz. the existence of God, freewill, and the immortality of the soul. As I noted in the previous chapter, the advent of Newtonian Physics entailed a deterministic, self-contained and self-explanatory universe, and this threatened those traditional claims that there is a God, the human beings possess free will and that souls are immortal.

Let me now demonstrate how Kant's critical and systematic philosophy is devised. Kant's solution to the problem is based on the reversal of the normally externalist conception of truth, as argued by Beiser (2000:23-24) and Di Giovanni (1992:418-419). According to this view, truth consists in the conformity of concepts with objects, that is, in the correspondence of the representations in one's mind with things that exists independent of these representations.[6] The old type of metaphysics was based on the premise that the truth of something consists in the mind matching an object in itself, i.e. a thing-in-itself. Kant is willing to accept the externalist notion of truth only insofar as ordinary experience is concerned but he says that one cannot accept it as a philosophical account of truth, exactly because this externalist conception of truth aids the sceptic for it is impossible to get outside one's representations to see if they are conforming to an object in itself. In trying to defeat the sceptic's position, the dogmatic does not

[6] NB. Kant understood that the function of reason is to synthesize sense perception. In performing any synthesis reason relies on a variety of principles, such as causation and substance. Hume had shown that such principles cannot be inductive generalisations from sense perceptions, and yet these principles are indispensable to one's experiences. Kant understood that if these principles cannot be derived from sense perceptions then they must be a priori. That is to say, that such principles must be known prior to the elements they relate. In the Critique of Pure Reason Kant tries to demonstrate through a painstaking deduction all the synthetic a priori forms, such as causation and substance, which are used by reason in its task of synthesising sense perceptions. I shall come back to these points in more detail later in this section.

do herself any favours either by trying to diffuse the matter with the assumption that one should just accept the external notion of truth as a truism, without questioning it. Kant proposes that a philosophical account of truth must be seen as the conformity of objects with our concepts, as the agreement of our perceptions with certain universal and necessary concepts that determine the form or structure of experience. If truth is seen in this light then we do not need to get outside our representations to see if they conform to objects in themselves. Rather, the standard of truth will be found within the realm of consciousness itself by seeing whether a representation conforms to the universal and necessary principles.

In this light, the thesis of the internal conception of truth is the backbone of Kant's transcendental idealism. These terms, viz. transcendental and idealism, need some further explanation due to their complicated usage by Kant. Let me deal with the term 'transcendental' first. Transcendental must not be confused with transcendent; transcendent literally means beyond, and in this case it would have meant beyond experience, whereas as Kant says "I call all cognition transcendental that is occupied not so much with objects but rather with our mode of cognition of objects insofar as this is to be possible *a priori*". (A 12/ B 25) Thus, by transcendental, Kant does not mean that which is concerned with things beyond one's experience, rather, he means that which is both prior to and which enables one's experiences, and therefore, as Gardner (1999:46) notes:

> ...transcendental enquiry is therefore enquiry into the cognitive constitution of the subject to which objects must conform;...transcendental knowledge, is at one remove from objects, and concerns only what makes objects and a priori knowledge of them possible...

Transcendental must also be contrasted here with Empirical. The Distinction between these two terms must be grasped fully if one is to avoid misunderstandings, which are quite often found among some of Kant's commentators, especially earlier ones, such as Jacobi (I shall address Jacobi's main criticism of Kantian philosophy at the end of this chapter). Allison (1983:7-8) and Gardner (1999:89-92) note that the empirical/transcendental distinction is very important within the philosophy of Kant. For Kant, any human experience can be understood at two levels, the empirical level or the level of ordinary experience, and the transcendental level or the philosophical level, i.e. the level that reflects upon the ordinary experience. At the empirical level appearances and objects have distinct ontological status. That is, for any given observer, any given object can be considered as it really is, i.e. as a physical or empirical object, and the representation of this same object which is possessed by this same observer under certain conditions is what it is meant by an appearance. At this level the object is a physical object and the appearance is a mental object, in the Cartesian sense. At the transcendental level, however, the distinction between these two entities is not ontological, it is rather a distinction of how any given object can be considered. That is, any given object can be either considered as bearing a relation to a human subject, and thus under these spatio-temporal conditions of human sensibility, or as independent of any such conditions. In the former case, the object appears to a subject as having a set of properties, which are pre-established by the spatio-temporal conditions that govern human experience, and in the latter case, the object is considered independently of such conditions, and thus if human beings could escape those conditions that govern human experience, then human beings would be able to experience the object as it is in itself.

Kant's idealism requires some characterisation also. He is an idealist because he understands that reality somehow is dependent on the human mind. He is an idealist because when he adopts an internalist conception of truth, he shifts the gap between the representations in one's mind and the things that exist independent of these representations from a space outside the mind and into a space within the mind. Important here is that Kant maintains that one can only know these objects insofar as they fit one's cognitive abilities; one does not create the objects of one's cognition, one still requires a contact with reality so that one has access to the content of one's judgements; therefore, since Kant subscribes to an internal conception of truth, and since he also subscribes to the existence of an empirical reality, he is forced to conclude that one knows things only as appearances and not as things-in-themselves. Thus, although being a transcendental idealist, Kant is also committed to empirical realism, that is, he is committed to the notion that objects are not dependent on a subject for their existence, but they can only be known as appearances, since any proper experience of these objects depend on a subject's cognitive capabilities; Allison (1983:6-7) writes:

> ...when Kant claims that he is an empirical realist and denies that he is an empirical idealist he is really affirming that our experience is not limited to the private domain of our own representations, but includes an encounter with empirically real spatio-temporal objects...

Therefore, Kant's idealism could be said to be a sort of epistemological idealism, it runs only insofar as it concerns one's knowledge of reality, and this is in direct contrast with Berkeley's idealism, which is much stronger in its claims, since it has an ontological claim on one's reality,

as it claims that reality is constituted by the representations in one's mind or as Berkeley, famously puts it '*esse est percipi*'.

How does Kant argue this? All our theoretical knowledge is restricted to the systematisations of what are mere spatio-temporal appearances, i.e. the objects of one's experiences must be placed within space and time, where space is the form of or the condition of one's 'outer sense', and time is the form of or the conditions of one's 'inner sense' (A 22/B 37). By sense, Kant means a way by which objects can be available to a subject's *intuitions* or sense perceptions. Space and time are the pure forms of human sensibility. In the transcendental aesthetic part of the Critique Kant puts forward various arguments defending this view. One such argument is that space is the outer sense because if one tries to imagine a world without objects, one still has to imagine a world of empty space; that is to say, that it is impossible for one to imagine no space or as Kant says "Space is a necessary representation, *a priori*, that is the ground of all outer intuitions. One can never represent that there is no space, though one can very well think that there are no objects to be encountered in it." (A 24/B 39) Kant's argument for the a priority of time are analogous to his argumentation about the a priority of space. Thus, time is the inner sense, because one's inner objects, i.e. one's mental states, can only be available to one's perception if these are placed within a temporal framework. It is only within this framework that one is able to infer that "several things exist at one and the same time (simultaneously) or in different times (successively)". (B 46) Hence, if one tried to imagine a world without time, it would be impossible, since it would be impossible for one to infer that objects exist simultaneously with one another, or that objects succeed each other in time. All of one's thoughts regarding sense experience have in one way or another to be grounded in time: "Time is a necessary representation that grounds all intuition. In regard to appearances in

general one cannot remove time, though one can very well take the appearances away from time". (A 31/B 46) Kant goes even further and claims that things could not be different and that "time can no more be intuited externally than space can be intuited as something in us." (A 23/B 37) It is in this way that Kant infers that the objects of one's sense experience are a priori spatio-temporal since if they were not they would not be possible objects of perception for human beings.

But these spatio-temporal *intuitions* or sense perceptions have an inter-dependent relation with concepts or *categories*, because "thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind". It is thus just as necessary to make the minds concepts sensible (i.e., to add an object to them in intuition) as it is to make its intuitions understandable (i.e., to bring them under concepts) (A 51/B 75). Thus, for Kant, a priori concepts, such as causation and substance, are also preconditions for human's experiences, and hence, as Cooper (1996:298) maintains: "Experience...is not a matter simply of receiving sense-data, but also of a self-conscious creature employing its understanding to apply concepts to such data." Thus, if one is to have a proper experience of a thing, such as a book, one's *intuitions* or sense perceptions of that same thing must be directly linked with the *categories* or a process of conceptualisation of this thing. In other words, for Kant, a proper experience of a thing involves both the receiving of data through sense perception and at the same time the making of a conceptual judgement of this same thing. Moreover, all proper experiences must be accompanied by an I, that is, there must be a self-conscious subject who is the proprietor of those experiences, or as Kant says:

> The I think must be able to accompany all my representations; for otherwise something would be represented in me that could not be thought at all, which is to

> say that the representation would either be impossible or else at least would be nothing for me. (B 131-132)

Kant is not claiming in the above passage that every single one of one's representations must be accompanied by the I think, nor is he claiming that one must be able to have a single thought that encompasses all of one's representations; what he is in fact claiming is that it must be possible for one to recognise each of one's representations as belonging to one, as noted by Gardner (1999:146). Transcendental unity of apperception must not be confused with the empirical I. In the Aesthetic, Kant asserts that "the empirical consciousness, which accompanies different representations, is in itself diverse and without relation to the identity of the subject" (A133). That is, the empirical I is something that resembles the Humean bundle theory, and hence, Kant agrees with Hume, insofar as ordinary experience is concerned, that the self cannot be singled out over and above the totality of one's mental states. But in contrast with Hume, Kant does not think that this is the full picture. Kant maintains there must be some sort of a priori self-consciousness, and this is the transcendental unity of apperception. (NB the term apperception is the English translation of the French *s'apercevoir de* and it has been borrowed from Leibniz, who meant by it: perceiving one's own mental states) That is to say, that transcendentally, something must remain numerically identical, so that representations can be attributed to a single subject. Thus, self-consciousness, or the transcendental unity of apperception in Kantian terminology, is the most basic principle out of which all human cognitive experience is founded, exactly because it enabled intuitions or sense-perceptions to belong to a subject, as well as being the source of a priori concepts or categories of the understanding or *Verstand*, whilst also providing the ground for the combination of these in pure reason or *Vernunft*, as noted by Caygill (1996:83). Many of

Kant's commentators were not satisfied with such a sharp distinction between the empirical I and the transcendental I, and I shall come back to this point later.

Summing up. Kant's transcendental idealism maintains that i. what can be known about reality is somehow related to minds, and ii. that the vehicle for such knowledge is based on those a priori categories, i.e. universal and necessary principles, e.g. substance and causation, and forms of intuition, i.e. space and time, that one's cognitive capacities possess. Moreover, transcendental idealism defends i. the distinction between appearances and things in themselves, and that ii. one can only know things as appearances and not as things in themselves.

Kant's philosophical system was supposed to be immune to both scepticism and dogmatism whilst maintaining reason or *Vernunft* as a chief tenet in philosophical enquiry. Kant could escape scepticism by claiming that the sceptic's doubts over metaphysics were based on an external conception of truth, i.e. the conception of truth that maintains that truth is the fitting of the representations of one's mind with an object out there, i.e. a thing in itself. Kant agrees with the sceptic and concedes that this notion of truth is unrealisable, but he points out that the truth of one's judgments about reality would still be maintained if one understands that the truth of these judgements consist in the conformity of the representations in one's mind with universal and necessary principles that are to be found in one's mind. That is to say, Kant understands that whilst one cannot know the thing-in-itself and any knowledge claim about the thing-in-itself (such as the claims made by the old kind of metaphysics) is ill founded, that one can still know appearances, and thus, knowledge claims about appearances (such as the ones made by new metaphysics) are within one's epistemological reach. Kant's conclusion also avoids dogmatism because the new metaphysics is within one's cognitive capabilities, it is based on reason, and thus it does not require an act of *faith* to be accepted.

Furthermore, the distinction between things-in-themselves and appearances enabled Kant to devise a system where rational criticism does not end up in scepticism, and naturalism does not end up in materialism, and in which rational criticism and naturalism do not pose a threat to each other. The distinction between things-in-themselves and appearances provides a rational criticism immune to scepticism since reason is now fenced off within the realm of appearances, i.e. the phenomenal realm, as I have demonstrated above. It also provides a naturalism which does not end up in materialism, since natural events are subject to universal and necessary laws, but this does not imply materialism because Kant denies that these universal and necessary laws apply to the things-in-themselves, i.e. the noumenal realm, rather they apply only to the realm of appearances. Transcendental idealism is also supposed to be a system where rational criticism ceased to be a threat to naturalism; on the contrary, it supports naturalism, because it discloses all universal and necessary laws, which apply to all appearances. Naturalism also ceased to be a threat to rational criticism because since universal and necessary laws apply solely to the realm of appearances, then, the autonomy of pure reason, as well as its freedom and practicality, is maintained since pure reason does not operate from within the phenomenal world, rather it operates from the noumenal world. And since reason operates from the noumenal world, morality is also saved, that is to say, individuals are free, equal and practical beings, since reason is not under the influence of those universal and necessary laws that reign in the phenomenal world.

In this light, the main conclusion drawn by Kant in the Critique is that one can know the truth of claims made in theoretical subjects such as pure and applied mathematics and physics but that one cannot know the truth about claims, such as claims about the immortality of the soul, that human beings possess freewill, and that there is a God made by dogmatic metaphysics, such

as the metaphysics defended by the Leibniz-Wolff school. In fact, Kant asserts that such claims cannot be proved, disproved or even be the subject of knowledge, and that these could be merely a matter of faith, I quote:

> ...I cannot even assume God, Freedom, and immortality for the sake of the necessary practical use of my reason unless I simultaneously deprive speculative reason of its pretension to extravagant insights; because to attain such insights, speculative reason would have to help itself to principles that in fact reach only to objects of possible experience, and which if they were to be applied to what cannot be an object of experience, then they would always actually transform it into an appearance, and thus declare all practical extension of pure reason to be impossible. Thus, I had to deny knowledge in order to make room for faith. (B 30)

Kant understands that when reason tries to free itself from the limitations of experience, by aiming towards the "absolute totality in the synthesis of conditions" (A 326/B 382), it begins to see things such as the soul and God as if these were possible objects of experience; and this leads reason to a number of antinomies (i.e. antinomies is the word used by Kant to describe some paradoxes faced by reason, e.g. Kant provides a valid proof for the thesis that there belongs to the world a being that necessarily exists and who serves as the grounds to all contingent existents, and Kant also provides a valid proof for the antithesis that denies this thesis). In fact, Caygill (1996:347) notes that "it was Kant who revealed that reason and freedom could as easily undermine as support each other", and it is this very insight that serves as the distinction between

pure and practical reason. But if it is impossible for one to gain any sort of knowledge of such claims, why should one believe in them? Kant's answer to this question is given at the conclusion of the Critique of Pure Reason, and in his Critique of Practical Reason, where he distinguishes between pure reason and practical reason, or between reason as the faculty that enables human beings to gain knowledge, and reason as the capacity to determine the will, where will is to be understood as the internal states of a subject, i.e. desires, intentions and choices, no matter if these have been, are being, or will be realised. The distinction between pure and practical reason is Kant's effort in trying to solve those paradoxical circumstances faced by reason. Kant asserts that the limits which are faced by pure reason when it is confronted by what is the case does not hold for the practical use of reason when it tries to determine what ought to be the case. The following passage is enlightening:[7]

> In nature the understanding can cognise only what exists, or has been, or will be. It is impossible that something in it ought to be other than what, in all these time-relations it in fact is; indeed the ought, if one has merely the course of nature before one's eyes, has no significance whatsoever. We cannot ask at all what

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[7] NB When Kant says that he wants to deny knowledge and make room for faith, he is really raising a sharp partition between philosophy and theology. That is to say, he is saying that reason and faith are to be given specific places whereby they do not pose a threat to each other. I note that this sounds a lot like Spinoza's project in the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus where he says that "they who do not know how to distinguish between philosophy and theology dispute whether scripture should be aidant to reason or reason helpful to scripture; that is to say, whether the sense of scripture ought to be made to harmonise with reason, or reason be made to bend to scripture. Of these two views one is taken by the sceptics, who deny the certainty of reason, the other by the dogmatists. That both grossly err, however, is apparent from what has already been said...we have shown that scripture does not teach philosophy but piety." (quote from the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus by Benedict Spinoza, London: Trübner & Co., 1862, p. 259). Hence, it could be said that Kant himself, was already embracing some of Spinoza's themes, although further research would be needed to establish whether he was aware of this or not.

> ought to happen in nature anymore than we can ask what properties a circle ought to have. (A 547/B 575)

On commenting on Kant's views on this issue Dahlstrom (1999:18) maintains that "...to the extent that someone's choices are in fact determined by a principle issuing from his or her reason alone, and not by anything given,..., then that person is self-determining or free. The moral law,..., is just such a principle." From the moral law, i.e. the capacity to make free and rational choices, Kant derives his famous categorical imperative, which asserts that in its three famous formulations that: i. one should treat mankind as a whole, oneself included, always as an end and not as a means, that is, in an ideal world all mankind would treat each other with mutual respect; ii. that we should act as if the maxim of our actions was to become universalisable, that is, if I do something I must accept that everybody else has the right to do the same thing; and iii. these maxims are to be rational maxims, that is, all rational beings will achieve the same maxims, and if they do not then they should be able to resolve any disagreement through rational dialogue. In such a world one's will is not at the mercy of natural laws, rather the only law is the categorical imperative, which is a law that reason imposes on itself. For Kant, morality does not only involve the moral law, i.e. the categorical imperative, and the autonomy of the will, it also involves an object towards which all action is directed. Such an object encompasses virtue and happiness and it is defined by Kant as the highest good or the summum bonum. Moreover, Kant asserts that things such as God, freedom and the immortality of the soul are secured, because i. God must exist, since morality belongs to the noumenal world and the requirement of happiness involves events in the phenomenal world, and thus in order for happiness to be possible, God must exist because only by presupposing a creator who would ensure the exact correspondence

between both realms can the achievement of happiness be possible, i.e. God acts as the guarantor for the existence of those realms; ii. human beings must be free since one needs freedom to satisfy the conditions of independence from natural laws, one must be free from outside influences whilst choosing; and iii. the immortality of the soul is secured so that human beings are able to fulfil their goal of achieving the highest good, if happiness is not possible in this life, then it is possible in another future life. In securing these, Kant delivers his promise in BXXX, where he says that he must deny knowledge to make room for faith.

I cannot assess here the merits of Kant's claims for this would be straying from the main point of this dissertation. The crucial point here is to point out yet another dichotomy in Kant's philosophy, that is, his distinction between pure and practical reason. This sort of dualism in Kant's philosophy, that is, his distinctions between things-in-themselves and appearances, reason and faith, pure and practical reason, empirical I and noumenal I, were the source of much criticism from his later commentators, such as the post-Kantian German Idealists, and this is perhaps one of the reasons why they sought for answers in the monistic philosophy of Spinoza, I shall come back to this point later in this dissertation.

THE RECEPTION OF THE FIRST CRITIQUE

I turn now to the problem of the reception of the Critique. As soon as it was published the Critique caused a furore in philosophical circles both in Germany and abroad, and soon numerous reviews appeared, which highlighted the various obscure philosophical points in the book, as well as trying to unravel Kant's hard language. This early commentaries on the Critique have probably influenced the various directions to which post-Kantian philosophy was to follow.

On the one hand, some of Kant's contemporaries welcomed his critical and systematic philosophy. The most prominent figure of these supporters is without doubt KL Reinhold. At first Reinhold aimed merely to explicate Kantian philosophy in a more simplistic way, and this is exactly what he does with the publication of Letters on the Kantian Philosophy. Later his project became much grander, as he attempted to improve the critical and systematic philosophy, since he understood that Kant's transcendental unity of apperception, i.e. Kant's conception of self-consciousness, was not simple and foundational enough. Reinhold understood that there must be a simpler and more foundational principle, and thus he attempted to devise a new conception of self-consciousness. This route was later followed by the post-Kantian Absolute idealists, who, to a certain degree, radicalised Reinhold's position as will become apparent during the unfolding of this thesis. On the other hand, other of Kant's contemporaries openly attacked his philosophy and this led to heated and fiery discussions in all quarters. At this point, it is worth mentioning FH Jacobi and S Maimon, since they have provided some of the classical and most successful criticisms of Kantian philosophy.

One of the most quoted criticisms of the Critique comes from Jacobi. In his "David Hume on Faith", Jacobi (1994:336) says: "...without that presupposition [the thing-in-itself] I could not enter into the [Kantian] system, but with it I could not stay within it." In this passage, Jacobi refers to a possible contradiction in the Critique, that is, that without presupposing the existence of the things-in-themselves one could not enter the critical and systematic philosophy system, and yet the way Kant presented the thing-in-itself is very problematic. Let us look at Jacobi's criticism in some detail now. Jacobi understands that Kant asks one to think of reality as a representation and at the same time Kant also asks one to think of reality as the very thing that impinges on one's representations. Gardner (1999:269-270) notes that Jacobi understands that:

> The latter is essential in so far as transcendental philosophy wishes to stand in agreement with our fundamental conviction that our perceptions are of real things, things which are independent of our representations and present outside us;...but transcendental idealism also informs us that things-in-themselves,..., are utterly unknown to us...

Jacobi points out what became to be known as the problem of affection. Jacobi understands that Kant's system requires that one's mind must be affected by an object if it is to have any sort of material for thought, and he points out that within the Kantian system there can be only two candidates for the task of affecting one's mind, viz. appearances and a thing-in-itself. Jacobi knows that Kant regards the latter as being the object that affects one's mind, but his own strategy in criticising Kant is to show that neither appearances nor things-in-themselves can act as affecting objects. Jacobi maintains that appearances cannot do the job because on the one hand Kant understands that appearances are representations in one's mind, and on the other Kant argues that the thing-in-itself cannot be said to be the affecting object because it is an unknown entity, and this fact prevents the use of any of the categories, causality included, to it, as noted by Allison (1983:247-248), Di Giovanni (1994:100), and Gardner (1999:270). It follows that Jacobi understands that the Kantian system is flawed, since it claims that things-in-themselves impinge on one's representations, and at the same time claims that one cannot have knowledge of the things-in-themselves, and on the face of it, this was a strong objection against Kant.

In the light of this, commentators have taken one of two stances. Some commentators, such as Strawson (1966:20-22) and Turbayne (1955:225-244), understand that transcendental

idealism collapses when faced by the problem of affection and that the only way out for transcendental idealism is for it to let go the thing-in-itself, and thus turn itself into a much stronger form of idealism, something like Berkeley's ontological idealism. In fact these commentators take the stance that Kant's transcendental idealism is a misshapen version of Berkeley's idealism. For instance, Strawson (1966:22) writes: "Kant, as transcendental idealist, is closer to Berkeley than he acknowledges", and Turbayne (1955:225-244) who explicitly argues throughout his paper that Kant's idealism is nothing more than Berkeley's idealism in disguise. Others, on the contrary, such as Di Giovanni (1994:101), argue that Jacobi misunderstood Kant's terminology and system, and thus do not think that Jacobi's criticisms, i.e. the problem of affection, pose a threat to transcendental idealism, I quote:

> ...it [the argument] showed by how far Jacobi had failed to grasp the meaning of the *Critique*...The function of the thing-in-itself is not to account for the origin of sense impressions...but to canonize the limitations to which reason is subject.

Di Giovanni probably refers here to the two-aspect reading of the distinction of the thing-in-itself and appearances. This reading was proposed by Bird (1962) in his Kant's Theory of Knowledge and it has recently been defended by Allison. According to this reading things-in-themselves are to be understood negatively, that is, as objects completely abstracted from sense-perceptions; and appearances are not regarded as distorted representations from, or as completely different entities from, things-in-themselves. There is very little textual evidence to support this modern reading; in fact, the textual evidence seems to support the reading that Kant's contemporaries had of the thing-in-itself and appearance, the two-realms reading, that is, that the

thing-in-itself and the appearance are different objects. I do not wish to assess commentator's positions in any further detail here, since this is not relevant for this thesis. The main point is that Jacobi's strong criticism was noted by virtually all of Kant's readers.

It is also noteworthy that Jacobi's argument, if it is sound, also has a wider implication for Kant's views. As I have mentioned above, Kant limited any epistemic claim to the phenomenal realm, and he did so, so that some room would be made for faith in the noumenal realm. He understood that the Enlightenment crisis could be solved by giving each, reason and faith, a role in one's life. That is to say, that reason would reign supreme in the phenomenal world, whilst faith would be unchallenged in the noumenal world. But since Jacobi's criticisms might cast doubt on Kant's system, exactly because it showed possible inconsistencies in Kant's conception of the noumenal world, i.e. the realm of the thing-in-itself, then by default, it also threatened faith, and the crisis is back to square one.

Maimon also provided Kant's critics with powerful ammunition, as noted by Gardner (1999:330), Beiser (2000:28), and Bransen (1991:80-84). Kant's predecessors, such as empiricists like Locke, and rationalists like Leibniz, tried to bridge the gap between one's mind and the external world by subscribing to either intellectual or sensorial epistemic theories. In other words, both empiricists and rationalists understood that either the faculty of sensibility (empiricists) or the faculty of understanding (rationalists) as different ways of gaining knowledge, i.e. as a way of bridging the gap between one's mind and the external world. Bransen (1991:80) maintains that "it might be argued that Kant opened up the possibility of a functional approach to concepts and intuitions, instead of the unfruitful relational approach, by stressing the fundamental different functions of concepts and intuitions in acquiring knowledge", that is to say, that intuitions and concepts are different functions of thought processing, rather

than mere connections between one's mind and the external world. Maimon's major problem with transcendental philosophy is the sharp distinction between understanding, i.e. the active faculty of conceptualisation, and sensibility, i.e. the receptive faculty of perception, that is to say, that Kant has separated these faculties so sharply, and this seems to imply the impossibility of any sort of interaction between them. In fact, Beiser (2000:28) notes that "Maimon claimed that the dualism between these faculties was analogous to the old Cartesian dualism between mind and body, and that all the problems of the older dualism should hold *mutatis mutandis* for the new one". I do not wish to assess Maiming criticisms any further; the point here is that Maimon's criticism was noted, by and large, by all of Kant's commentators.

Such criticisms only favoured the foes of the Enlightenment all too well and served to point out that Kant had failed to solve the crisis. In fact it could be said that Kant only made matters worse by pointing out so well the problems faced by the Enlightenment, and thus Kant's project seemed to have failed, mainly due to its reliance on various dichotomies. Kant's reliance on so many dichotomies was viewed as a problem by his contemporaries because they understood philosophy to be a science, and as such philosophy required a simple and basic principle out of which a whole philosophical system could be derived; just as sciences such as physics do. Adding to this situation is the fact that Jacobi and Mendelssohn had brought Spinoza's philosophy back into the open. As I mentioned in various passages above, Spinoza's thought was very attractive to many, exactly because it defended a systematic and monistic philosophical system free of the problems faced by Kant's dichotomies, and thus it is not a surprise to find the post-Kantian German Idealists seeking refuge in Spinoza's thought and trying to succeed where Kant had failed. It is my understanding that Fichte and Schelling (and Hegel) attempted to do this by trying to re-establish reason as a chief tenet for philosophical enquiry,

whilst avoiding the pitfalls suffered by their predecessors. As I said, Spinoza, the great rationalist and metaphysician, was viewed as a good option to be followed, since his philosophical system avoided dualisms, and it was founded on those two central tenets of the Enlightenment, viz., rational criticism and naturalism, and it subscribed to the view that a philosophical system has to be foundational and systematic. The following passage from Widgery (1950:291) might corroborate my last point since it describes how much more formal and schematic the philosophical systems devised by the German Idealists were in comparison to their predecessors, with the exception of Spinoza; again, as I said above, the foundational and systematic features of Spinozism might well have been an attractive feature to Fichte and Schelling (and Hegel), I quote:

> The idealist philosophers of early nineteenth century Germany were university teachers. The most eminent philosophers of the preceding period, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Bacon, Berkeley, Hume were not. This contrast is significant with reference to differences in modes of approach and in methodology. The professional philosophers have a more definite schematism and formalism than the others, with exception of Spinoza.

Lastly, it is worth quoting here a passage by Henrich (2003:94) that corroborates my claim that the post-Kantians saw Spinoza as providing many of the answers to the problems that were left unanswered by Kant. The post-Kantians, in fact, saw those two doctrines, Kantianism and Spinozism, as allied doctrines in the struggle against religious dogmatism and as allies in explicating reality. I quote:

> To the generation of Hegel, Schelling and their friends, Spinozism and Kantianism, despite their obvious incompatibilities, did appear to be allied: both constitute fundamental criticisms of traditional Christian religion, and especially of theological doctrines that were dominant at that time...to the generation of Hegel and his young friends, this system of the past - wherein God is conceived as the external cause of the world and as continuing to exercise demand on us - is just as incompatible with Kant's doctrine of freedom (in which everything is subordinated to freedom) as it is with Spinoza's doctrine of the immanent *ensoph* (in which there are no external causes).

Thus, in what follows in this thesis, I shall try to demonstrate how Fichte and Schelling understood, or misunderstood, Spinoza's philosophy, as well as pointing out the philosophical themes which they borrowed from Spinoza, and how they further developed these themes. In short I shall demonstrate how greatly indebted Fichte and Schelling were to Spinoza.

PART II

FICHTE AND SPINOZA

FICHTE

This part of my thesis will be solely dedicated to the investigation of Fichte's Spinozism. Various commentators, such as Jacobi (1994), Di Giovanni (1994), Beiser (2000), Bowie (2003), and Henrich (2003) have acknowledged the fact that Fichte was influenced by both Kant's and Spinoza's philosophy. Despite this fact, commentators have not researched this issue in detail - they acknowledge it, but they do not investigate the implications of this fact for a proper understanding of Fichte's philosophy. In this chapter, I propose to primarily do just this: to investigate the importance of Fichte's Spinozism for a proper understanding of his philosophy. In order to establish this I shall first establish if my claim that Fichte subscribed to Spinozism has any foundation. Secondly, I shall demonstrate what Fichte was trying to do in writing his philosophical system, that is, I shall demonstrate that Fichte was trying to resolve many of the problems which Kant unsuccessfully attempted to solve, and that he (Fichte) saw many of the solutions for those Kantian dichotomies in Spinoza's monistic philosophy. Thirdly, and lastly, I shall demonstrate the various similarities between Fichte and Spinoza's system on a number of issues, from determinism to ethics.

FICHTE, KANT AND SPINOZA

The first point I wish to try and establish is if my claim that Fichte subscribed to Spinozism has any foundation. Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814), German philosopher, is the first great Post-Kantian Idealist. Despite this fact, Fichte's philosophy has remained relatively unknown and little studied in the Anglo-American tradition. Recently, however, his writings have become

fashionable, and a number of commentaries and papers have been published. His Kantianism has been acknowledged since the beginnings of his career by his commentators, and rightly so. Fichte (1993:357), himself, acknowledges in a letter dated August-September 1790 to his friend Weisshuhn that:

> ...I have been living in a new world ever since reading the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Propositions which I thought could never be overturned have been overturned for me. Things have been proven to me which I thought could never be proven for example, the concept of absolute freedom, the concept of duty, etc. and I feel all the happier for it. It is unbelievable how much respect for mankind and how much strength this system gives us.

This passage clearly shows how fascinated he was with Kant's Critical Philosophy, and thus the question here is: Why was Fichte so taken by Kant's writings? To answer this question I must refer to events in Fichte's early academic life. Green (1978:1-2) notes that Fichte:

> like both Schelling and Hegel, the other leading Idealist philosophers,...began as a student of theology, though his subsequent career earned him a reputation primarily as a philosopher. He was eighteen years old when he enrolled as a theological student at the University of Jena in 1780. Neither there nor in his subsequent studies at Wittenberg and Leipzig did he devote himself to a study of Kant's philosophy, the crowning works of which were coming into print during these years. Rather, he seems to have become convinced of the truth of

> determinism, especially as articulated in Spinoza's Ethics. The struggle to free himself from a deterministic view of the world began during his student years and remained a major motive throughout his subsequent life and writings...

Within the context of his early academic life, it becomes clear that when Fichte says in his letter to Weisshuhn that propositions which he thought could never been overturned had been overturned for him, he is clearly making reference to his early faith in Spinoza's philosophy, especially its determinism, and how it had been overturned by Kant's philosophy. Within the Kantian system, as I noted in the previous chapter, both the natural laws that govern the physical world and the freedom of the will are secured by the distinction between practical and pure reason, as well as by the distinction of phenomenal and noumenal realms. Thus, it can be said that the young Fichte was a devotee of Spinozism and determinism, despite being deeply concerned by the moral implications. His conversion to Kantianism came about only later after reading Kant's Critiques. Fichte understood that Kant's critical philosophy pointed in the right direction as it attempted to safeguard both the natural laws that govern the physical world and freewill: each had a place within a specific realm. (NB. It is worth reminding the reader here that despite the fact that Fichte was much taken by Kantianism, he was also dissatisfied by its numerous dichotomies, as I have pointed out in the previous chapter). Corroborating this is Breazeale (1993:3-4), who also noted Fichte's early faith in Spinozism, I quote:

> Little is known concerning Fichte's philosophical orientation during these early years. He appears to have subscribed to the Leibnizian-Wolffian system, which he interpreted in a strictly deterministic manner. The surviving evidence shows

> how, under the influence of this interpretation, the young Fichte reluctantly abandoned his own belief in free will and became a defender of metaphysical fatalism. Although such an interpretation was rejected by Leibniz and Wolff themselves (who insisted upon the compatibility between 'free will' and 'determinism'), it was nevertheless widespread in the late eighteenth century and was often (and derisively) identified with 'Spinozism'. The debate over the issue of 'Spinozism' and its alleged pantheistic consequences was one of the most important intellectual concerns of the era and reached its peak in the early 1780s (with the pantheism controversy)...In the debate the young Fichte appears to have been firmly on the side of the metaphysical determinists.

Further corroborating my claim about Fichte's early Spinozism is the following passage from a letter dated 2nd July 1795 from Fichte to Reinhold where Fichte, himself, acknowledges his Spinozism; I quote Fichte (1993:401):

> Judging by what I have read of it, Schelling's entire essay is a commentary on my writings. But he has grasped the matter splendidly, and several people who did not understand me have found his essay very clear. Why he does not say so [i.e. that his essay is a commentary on the *Wissenschaftslehre* project] I do not quite understand. He will not wish to deny this, nor could he do so...I am glad that he has appeared. I am particularly fond of his references to Spinoza, on the basis of whose system mine can most properly be explained.

Adding to this is the following passage from Wright (2003:161) who comments on Fichte's possible avenues for learning about Spinoza and Spinozism:

> Fichte had several avenues for learning about Spinoza. First he possessed the 1677 edition of Spinoza's *Opera Posthuma*. Beyond that, however deeply he may actually have studied Spinoza's texts, Fichte certainly also knew of his ideas through Jacobi's writings, especially *Uber die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an Herr Moses Mendelssohn*.

And adding to this is the fact that Fichte must also have been familiar with Pierre Bayle's commentary on Spinoza since this was part of the canon of European Universities, as I mentioned previously in chapter 1 of this thesis.

Thus, this far I have established that Fichte, at least in his early academic life, was a Spinozist, as acknowledged by commentators and Fichte himself; and I have also established that Fichte was able to learn about Spinoza and Spinozism through various avenues and sources. In this thesis, however, I want to press on with the stronger claim that Fichte never truly gave up Spinozism. That is to say, I understand that Fichte retained many Spinozist themes throughout his life, although, perhaps, in a less pure fashion after his encounter with Kantianism. Support for my claim is the letter quoted above of Fichte to Reinhold, since he clearly refers to his *Wissenschaftslehre* project (this project encompasses various works which were written during Fichte's mature academic years, and written after his encounter with Kantian philosophy) and where he pays tribute to Spinoza as the chief and most consistent dogmatic (to be read materialistic) philosopher, I quote Fichte (1970:117):

So far as dogmatism can be consistent, Spinozism is its most logical outcome...

Thus, I believe that there is enough evidence in Fichte's correspondence as well as writings for my claim that Fichte was a Kantian insofar as he subscribed to the Critical Philosophy of Kant as well as being a Spinozist insofar as he referred back to Spinoza's philosophy to try to solve the problems of Kant's Critical Philosophy. In light of this, I shall press on and investigate what Fichte was trying to do in writing his philosophical system and demonstrate various similarities between Fichtean and Spinozian philosophies.

FICHTE'S PHILOSOPHICAL DEVELOPMENT AND METHODOLOGY USED IN DEALING WITH HIS SPINOZISM

It is generally agreed by Fichte's commentators, such as Copleston (1999:33-36), that his philosophical development can be divided into three phases. The first phase of his philosophical development is generally regarded as his more Kantian phase and it encompasses his earlier writings such as the Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation (1792) and his two political works, which were published anonymously, "Reclamation of the Freedom of Thought from the Princes of Europe, Who Have Oppressed It Until Now" and Contribution to the Rectification of the Public's Judgement of the French Revolution. The second phase of Fichte's philosophical development is usually referred to as the Jena period (1794-1799) and it is considered the most important phase of Fichte's philosophical development. This is the phase in which Fichte matures as a philosopher and where he develops his *Wissenshaftslehre* project, and as such this

phase encompasses the various writings of the project; but this is also the phase in which Fichte also started to work on some of his more popular writings, such as the "Some Lectures Concerning the Scholar's Vocation". Fichte's last philosophical phase is usually referred to as the Berlin period (1800-1814), and commentators usually refer to this phase as the eclipse of Fichte's career. In this last phase, Fichte continue to revise the writings of the project and tried to present it in popular form in a text entitled The Vocation of Man; but he also developed more popular works in different philosophical areas, such as the The Way to the Blessed Life, which is sometimes referred to as a mystical work and which deals with the issue of morality and religion. The famous Addresses to the German Nation of 1808 was also written during this phase and it was delivered during the Napoleonic occupation, and it advocates a new format for an education system for the German peoples so that they could reach the status of a German nation (which was non existent at the time).

My strategy in dealing with Fichte's Spinozism will be the following. I shall divide this part of my thesis in three chapters, as follows: "Metaphysics, Knowledge and Freedom", "Religion and Theology" and "Ethics". I shall also engage with a number of Fichte's writings, such as Attempt at a Critique of All revelation, the *Wissenschaftslehre* project and The Way to the Blessed Life. Most commentators concentrate their studies of Fichte's philosophy on the texts of the *Wissenschaftslehre* project. In a way this is understandable, since the writings of the project form the main canon of Fichte's writings. The consequence of this fact, however, is that most of Fichte's other writings have been, by and large, neglected by these commentators. I understand that different writings of Fichte contain different Spinozistic aspects, and thus my proposing to engage with most of Fichte's writings to make my point - for instance, the Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation deals with the issue of determinism, religion and revelation

which, I hold, have strong echoes of Spinozism, whilst the series of lectures entitled "Morality for Scholars" contain some very interesting similarities with Spinozian ethical views. Certainly, when possible, I shall not restrict myself to 'one writing' to 'one theme'; rather, I shall try to take a more holistic approach, and thus, I shall try to refer to different and relevant writings within any given theme. This approach should enable me to demonstrate that Fichte remained a strong Spinozist throughout his life, and that his Spinozism was not a mere infatuation of his early academic life.

CHAPTER 4: METAPHYSICS, KNOWLEDGE AND FREEDOM

FICHTE'S ABSOLUTE I AND SPINOZA'S SUBSTANCE

In chapter 2 of this thesis, the chapter entitled "The Enlightenment and its Adversaries", I have demonstrated that the Enlightenment movement was facing a major crisis due to the growing threat of scepticism. This threat was undermining knowledge, and thus, it also undermined all metaphysical and scientific enquiry. In chapter 3, the chapter entitled "Kant", more specifically in the section entitled "Kant's Solution to the Crisis", I demonstrated and argued that Kant attempted to solve this crisis with the publication of his *First* Critique, the Critique of Pure Reason. Kant attempted to demonstrate how experience of reality was possible at all, and in so doing, he aimed at demonstrating how one could gain knowledge of reality, and thus enabling metaphysical and scientific enquiry. In that same chapter, in the section entitled "The Reception of the *First* Critique", I argued that Kant had failed to solve the crisis. Kant's failure was mainly due to some inconsistencies in his system; inconsistencies such as a lack of systematicity, i.e. the lack of a unifying principle which rendered the system with a number of dichotomies, and it was difficult to see how these dichotomies could interact without a unifying principle, inconsistencies which Jacobi and Maimon quickly pointed out. Nevertheless, in untangling the Enlightenment crisis so well, Kant had made matters worse, he had opened Pandora's Box. It was thus left to the Post-Kantian Idealists to try to cut the Gordian knot and solve the crisis.

In writing the *Wissenschaftslehre* project Fichte aimed at answering the same basic questions that Kant unsuccessfully proposed to answer with the *First* Critique. Fichte aimed to answer: how is knowledge possible at all? In answering this question Fichte aimed at providing

the foundation of all experience, a first principle which would ground all experience - this first principle, is the Absolute I. Fichte's concept of the Absolute I is the cornerstone of his *Wissenschaftslehre* project. That is, Fichte also understood that philosophy ought to be systematic, and as such he attempted to derive his system from this first principle. In other words, Philosophy, for Fichte (and for his contemporaries) was a science, just as physics and biology are sciences, and as such it required a first principle, which could serve as the foundation of all philosophical enquiry. By providing a foundational principle and a systematic system in the project Fichte aimed at demonstrating how knowledge could be gained from one's experience of reality - and thus, fencing off the threat that scepticism posed at the time, and moreover, by providing a foundational principle and a systematic principle in the project he would also be able to demonstrate the nature of reality. Note here the contrast between their understanding of philosophy, and the contemporary understanding. Their understanding was that philosophy is a science and that it ought to be able to explain everything. The contemporary understanding is much less ambitious, as it only aims at explaining or disentangling particular philosophical problems. Perhaps the modern understanding is a direct consequence of the impossibility of the mammoth task faced by Fichte and his contemporaries and of their failure to succeed in such a task.

Fichte refers to the concept of the Absolute I in quite a few passages of his writings. One of such passages is the following. I quote Fichte (1970:109-110):

> The Absolute Ego of the first principle is not something (it has no predicate and cannot have any); it is absolutely what it is, and this cannot be further explained. But now, by means of this concept, consciousness contains the whole of reality;

> and to the not-self is allotted that part of it which does not attach to the self, and vice-versa. Both are something; the not-self is what the self is not, and vice-versa. As opposed to the Absolute-self...the not-self is absolutely nothing; as opposed to the limitable self is a negative quantity...

The obscurity of Fichte's language does not help his readers to make a complete sense of what he means by this concept. In fact Henrich (1982:23-24) notes this point when he says:

> Fichte's language steadfastly resists the implications of this model and therefore has to make use of many metaphors that are very difficult to understand....This explains why Fichte's task was so difficult and why he never succeeded in elaborating his theory with complete clarity, even though this was his goal. Consequently, rather than communicating his discovery, he hid it in texts that are among the most opaque and refractory in the entire tradition. The interpreter has to expend the same effort Fichte applied to the issue itself if he wants to free this discovery from the thicket of incomplete manuscripts.

And as Henrich says "the interpreter has to expend much effort" in trying to make sense of Fichte's terminology, and as such of Fichte's Absolute I. Despite the obscurity of the meaning of this concept Beiser (2002:284) notes that:

> for all the problems in admitting the existence of an absolute ego in his (Fichte) system, the fact still remains that Fichte writes of an absolute ego. The problem is

> then how to interpret such language. What does such language mean? And does it commit Fichte to the existence of the Absolute Ego? [my brackets]

My investigations on this concept have yield the surprising finding that there are three main interpretations of this concept, namely, what I call "the classical interpretation" of Schelling and Hegel, "the strong idealist interpretation" of Jacobi and Novalis, and "the modern interpretation" of commentators such as Breazeale, Pippin, Zoller, Neuhouser and Henrich. I shall now provide the reader with an outline of each of these interpretations and demonstrate the connection with Spinozism which each of these interpretations have.

According to the classical reading of Schelling and Hegel, the main thesis of the project could be outlined as follows: There is an Absolute I that somehow continuously creates the whole of reality, including Nature as a not-I and individual consciousnesses as relative "I"s, as noted by Bowie (2003:72), Dusing (1999:211), and Copleston (1946:47). It is perhaps interesting to quote the following passage by Copleston (1946:47) who summarises the classical reading well:

> In Fichte's system, therefore, Kant's Transcendental Ego blossomed out as the Absolute Ego, the ultimate source of finite subjects and objects...

Support for this classical interpretation can be found in Schelling's writings, especially in his work On the I as a Principle of Philosophy, where Schelling (1980:104) describes the Absolute I of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* project as:

> ...the Absolute I is neither a merely formal principle, nor an idea, nor an object, but pure I determined by intellectual intuition as *absolute reality*. [my italics]

And Schelling (1980:105):

> ...one speaks commonly of the existence of God, as if God could really exist, that is, could be posited conditionally and empirically (that, of course, is what is desired by most people and, as it seems, even by many philosophers of all times and factions). Anyone who can say that the Absolute I exists knows nothing about it.

In the first passage Schelling says that the concept of Absolute I is to be understood as "absolute reality", and this is to be understood as the very source of all reality, as the underlying principle that holds everything together - the Absolute I is the point of origin of all reality. And in the second passage Schelling is saying that just as the existence of God could not be asserted conditionally and empirically, so it is with the Absolute I. That is, to condition or empirically assert an absolute is to turn the absolute into a relative. The absolute cannot be conditioned by anything or empirically asserted by its own nature. Only relatives are conditioned by other relatives and only relatives are empirically asserted. Schelling seems to be asserting that since the concept of God and the concept of the Absolute I share some particular characteristics, i.e. their absolute-ness and their unknowability, then it seems that the concept of Absolute I could be equated with the concept of God.

The following passage from Hegel's The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy also corroborates the interpretation that the Absolute I is God. I quote Hegel (1977:159):

> After all, as Fichte says somewhere (see Fichte, *Werke* I, 253), his own system would only be formally correct for God's self-consciousness - a consciousness in which everything would be posited through the Ego's being posited.

It is worth here referring again to the letter dated 2nd of July 1795 of Fichte to Reinhold where he acknowledges that Schelling's interpretation was correct. I quote Fichte (1993:401):

> Judging by what I have read of it, Schelling's entire essay is a commentary on my writings. But he has grasped the matter splendidly, and several people who did not understand me have found his essay very clear. Why he does not say so [i.e. that his essay is a commentary on the *Wissenschaftslehre* project] I do not quite understand. He will not wish to deny this, nor could he do so...I am glad that he has appeared. I am particularly fond of his references to Spinoza, on the basis of whose system mine can most properly be explained.

And in a letter dated 30th August 1795 to Jacobi, Fichte (1993:411) explicitly says that:

> the pure I (i.e. the Absolute I) is posited outside ourselves and is called God.

This statement clearly corroborates the classical reading that the 'Absolute I' is 'God'. In the classical reading, Fichte's Absolute I becomes *virtually identical* to the classical interpretation of Spinoza's substance, such as found in Pierre Bayle's Dictionnaire Historique et Critique which was first published in 1695 and which was standard reading in European Universities (vide supra pp.15-16), and as such Fichte must have been familiar with it. By following such interpretations of Spinoza's substance it could be said that both the Absolute I and Spinoza's substance are the primary principle of their philosophical systems. Both the Absolute I and Spinoza's substance continuously creates reality, i.e. these are the source of, the point of origin of reality. And both are to be equated to God as an immanent entity. That is, God is within everything in reality; God as the source of reality is present in all that encompasses reality; God underlies and joins the whole of reality together; and since God is present in everything, everything is a modification of God. Note here that the Absolute I and the substance as God are not the mere sum of all the entities of reality, this would be a strict form of pantheism. The Absolute I and the substance as God, are wholes over and above the whole of reality, they create reality, but they are also present in what has been created.

If the classical reading is correct I can identify a problem for Fichte. He must spell out what sort of relation the Absolute I has with all the relative "I"s and with nature as a not-I. Unfortunately he does not explicitly say so. The problem of the right kind of relation between the substance and its modes is well known and it has plagued Spinozism since the late 17th century, and I believe, if the classical reading is correct, that this problem is transferable to the relation that the Absolute I bears with the relative "I"s and nature as a not-I.[8] I, however,

[8] NB. There are three main readings regarding the substance-mode relation. Bayle reads Spinoza as a Cartesian and the relation between the substance and its modes as a relation analogous to the subject-predicate relation. Wolfson reads Spinoza as an Aristotelian and the

understand that if one is to make sense of Fichte's views here, and by what Schelling says in his interpretation, that the relation between the Absolute I and the relative "I"s and nature as a not-I is to be interpreted as a causal relation - i.e. the Absolute I continuously *creates*, i.e. causes to be, the relative "I"s and nature as a not-I.

The classical reading also ties in well with one of the Kantian theses in the Critique of Practical Reason, i.e. the thesis that morality requires the postulation of a God, a God who is the guarantor that human action can be successfully enacted in the world. Kant, however, does not spell out how God, as a transcendent being, does this. In his first published work, the Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation, Fichte following Kant, held this same thesis as true. Fichte must have been aware of this problem, because, if the classical reading is correct then Fichte is transforming the transcendent God into an immanent entity. This move seems to solve the problem as an immanent God, a God that continuously creates the whole of reality, including subjective beings, is a God that can guarantee the congruency of all things, including subjective agency over objectivity. Thus, the Absolute I, now the immanent God, continuously creates nature and subjective consciousnesses, i.e. it is their source, and thus is able to guarantee their congruency. Bowie (2003:72) corroborates this:

> The difficulty always lies in how two sides can be connected if they are supposed to be of a different order from each other. If nature is merely objective and deterministic, then its relationship to subjectivity becomes problematic. Fichte's solution to this problem was the idea of an absolute I which includes both individual consciousnesses and nature within it, as relative I and not-I...

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relation as a genus-species relation. Curley reads Spinoza in the light of modern physics and the

Moreover, if the subjective can successfully *act* upon the objective, then, this implies that the subjective can successfully *experience* the objective. And, it is through this *experiencing* of the objective that we, as subjective beings, are able to gain knowledge of reality. If the classical reading is correct, then here is Fichte's answer to the Enlightenment crisis and to the threat of scepticism, i.e. the problem noted by Beiser (2000:20-21) that rational criticism when radicalised leads to scepticism for when one examines one's own beliefs one discovers that the evidence supporting these same beliefs can go either way. For the 18th century philosopher the only acceptable solution to this problem was to provide a proper foundation to one's beliefs so that one's beliefs are always properly grounded. Therefore, Fichte's answer to the problem is that the Absolute I, or the immanent God, continuously creates the whole of reality, i.e. nature as a not-I and the relative "I"s, and as such it acts as a connection that enables the relative "I"s to experience and gain knowledge of the not-I. The Absolute I is the foundation of our experiencing of reality.

I note, however, that the textual evidence for this classical reading is scattered and it cannot be conclusive. In Fichte's writings one also finds evidence supporting the strong idealist and the modern reading of Fichte's concept of "Absolute I".

The strong idealist reading was put forward by Jacobi and Novalis, and it has been noted by Di Giovanni (1994:106-116), Bowman (2002:290), Zoller (1998: 21), and Henrich (1982:29). According to this reading the concept of the Absolute I *plays the same role*, or *it has the same function*, in Fichte's project *as* the concept of substance plays in Spinoza's metaphysical system. That is, the concept of the Absolute I *is to be equated* to the concept of substance only insofar as

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relation as a causal relation.

these concepts are the cornerstones of these philosopher's projects, but this is *not* to say that Fichte's concept of the Absolute I *is to be equate*d with Spinoza's concept of substance insofar as this concept is God or Nature. Di Giovanni (1994: 110-111) explains this well when he says:

> Fichte had indeed chosen to give the name of "I" to his first principle and had clothed his account in the language of the "I". But this choice had meaning only programmatically, i.e. only inasmuch as, in terms of the assumed principle, it was possible to explain the possibility of genuine "selves". On Fichte's own admission, any such self would require individuation and hence historical determination. The supposed original "I", however, was *ex hypothesi* an unlimited act, a sheer *Agilität* that in itself defied all determination...There was nothing to distinguish it *per se* from Spinoza's substance, in other words, except perhaps, as mentioned, the systematic work that it performed.

Thus, according to this strong idealist reading, Fichte's main thesis in the project is to be understood as the following: the concept of the Absolute I is the primordial principle and it is to be understood as a metaphysical expression of the empirical I; it is sheer activity and spontaneity; it is the basis of consciousness. Note here that the Absolute I is not a mystical entity, it is not a God or Nature, it is merely the foundation for consciousness. The Absolute I is the very activity and spontaneity of rationality that gives rise to the I as an individual self. The individual self will, in turn, oppose itself to that which is not-itself, a not-I. Knowledge requires this kind of interaction, the interaction between a self and a not-self, since knowledge requires a subject-object relation. Thus, according to this reading the Absolute I is not God, as the classical

reading interprets, but the foundation of rationality. This reading, however, also ties in well with the wider philosophical picture of the time. As I asserted previously, the enlightenment was threatened by scepticism over whether knowledge was possible at all. Kant tried to reaffirm the possibility of knowledge in his *First* Critique where he, in a broader sense, answered the question: What can I know? Kant, however, had left too many issues unanswered and a system based on dichotomies. These unresolved issues lead the German Idealists to search for a unifying principle, an absolute, i.e. a principle that cannot be explained in relation to anything else, so that those dichotomies were unified, even if only in principle. Now, this strong idealist reading seems to fit this scenario well, as it seeks to establish a proper foundation for consciousness, the Absolute I, and thus providing a system that was properly unified and that solved those inconsistencies of the Kantian system. The foundation here is the Absolute I as rationality's activity and spontaneity that enables human beings to experience and gain knowledge of reality.

This interpretation of Fichte's Absolute I faces some criticisms. For Jacobi, who was a fierce critic of the Enlightenment's reliance on reason, such an unifying principle, the absolute principle, is the concept of God. And God has to be taken in *faith* and not in *knowledge*. Jacobi understands that the mere fact that we can affirm some knowledge about Fichte's Absolute I (i.e. that it posits itself as an individual I and that it then opposes itself to a not-I, and that it bends the not-I to its will) renders this concept not absolute but relative. That is, if Fichte's Absolute I is in fact an absolute principle, then we would have no knowledge of it - this is Jacobi's first problem with Fichte's system. According to this reading Fichte understood that reason was an absolute and first principle, and this fact puts Fichte in direct opposition to Jacobi. Bowie (1993:21) corroborates this when he says:

> Jacobi uses this notion of the inarticulable ground (i.e. of being in relation to anything else) to suggest that the only possible course for philosophy is to realise that it must transcend itself into revelation and belief in a personal God who is this Absolute. He thereby separates philosophy from theology, which becomes the realm of what cannot be explained but only revealed.

And Millan-Zaibert (200:145) explains Jacobi's position well when she says that for Jacobi:

> ...knowledge does not begin with a first principle which can be demonstrated, but with an absolute first principle that we must accept by an act of faith...

Thus Jacobi's position is that the proper foundation to any knowledge, the first principle, cannot be demonstrated but only taken by faith. As such Fichte's Absolute I cannot be the foundation of knowledge; rather, for Jacobi, God is. Whether or not Jacobi's reading is fair to the letter of Fichte's philosophy is not at stake here - in fact, there is much textual evidence that does not support Jacobi's reading as I will demonstrate below when I deal with the modern reading of Fichte's philosophy. It is noteworthy, however, that Jacobi's reading was very influential and it later helped to shape Schelling's philosophy. It helped shape Schelling's philosophy because in the light of Jacobi's criticism about the absolute Schelling, who at first was very sympathetic to Fichte's views, started to doubt that Fichte had really found the absolute principle, and this doubt prompted Schelling to enquire further into the nature of the absolute.

Jacobi (1994:502) openly criticised Fichte's position in a letter. He claimed that Fichte's position was nothing more than an inverted Spinozism. That is, the concept of the Absolute I played the same role in Fichte's system as the concept of substance played in Spinoza's; however, whilst in Spinoza, according to Jacobi's reading (and the reading of most commentators of the time), Spinozism starts and finishes in materialism, Fichte's system starts and finishes with thought. I quote from the letter:

> Little was lacking for this transfiguration of materialism into idealism to have already been realized through Spinoza. His substance, which underlies extended and thinking being, equally and inseparably binds them together; it is nothing but the invisible identity of object and subject (demonstrable only through inferences) upon which the system of the new philosophy is grounded, i.e. the system of *the autonomous philosophy of intelligence*. Strange, that the thought never occurred to Spinoza of inverting his philosophical cube; of making the upper side, the side of thought which he called *objective*, into the lower, which he called the subjective or *formal*; and then of investigating whether his cube still remained the same thing; still for him the one and only true philosophical shape of reality. Everything would have transformed itself without fail under his hands at the experiment. The cube that had hitherto been "substance" for him - the one matter of two entirely different beings - would have disappeared before his eyes, and in exchange a pure flame would have flared up, burning all by itself, with no need of *place* or *material to nourish it*: *Transcendental Idealism*!

Jacobi's point here was well explained by Zöller (1998:21):

> For Jacobi, the transcendental idealism introduced by Kant and radicalized by Fichte dissolves reality into a mere figment of the mind. Rather than combating skepticism, Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* is seen as supporting doubt in everyday reality by replacing the realist worldview of ordinary consciousness with the idealist production of a world that is nothing but appearances and hence appearances of nothing.

Novalis noted the same complaint regarding the dangerous implications of Fichte's system, as he interpreted it. I quote Novalis (2003:166):

> When one speaks philosophically of that which is to come, for example, of the annihilation of the not-I, then one guards against the illusion that there would come a point in time where this would take place...In every moment that we freely act there is such a triumph of the infinite I over the finite one; for this moment the not-I is really annihilated.

Henrich (1982:29) also notes Jacobi's complaint against Fichte's Absolute I as a *phantom* and further notes that if this interpretation is correct that it goes against the Kantian dictum that *intuitions without concepts are blind* since the I can never have an intuition of itself and as such it can never construct the concept of itself. I quote:

> F.H. Jacobi suspected that Fichte's Self is a phantom. The idea that the product of the Self is a mere concept would turn the Self into the absolute phantom, so to speak. This suggests that we should take the positing of the Self to be an intuition of itself. Nonetheless, this option faces difficulties of its own. Intuitions without concepts are blind. The present case shows once again how widely this Kantian principle can be applied. Were we to interpret self-knowledge only as a matter of the Self's looking in upon itself, we would be locking it up in Auerbach's cellar. How can it ever come to understand that it catches sight of itself, if it cannot also have an understanding that it is a Self and, thus, possess the concept of itself? The second variant of the circularity in the reflection theory prohibits us from interpreting the Self solely as an intuition of itself.

Jacobi's second complaint about Fichte's system follows on from the points stated above. That is, Jacobi understands that the Fichtean system does not combat scepticism, rather it supports it. Jacobi's point is that if the basis of our knowledge is the Absolute I as sheer activity, an activity that gives raise to the empirical I and the not-I, then the material world is made redundant. In fact, one may take this to an extreme and say that since the Absolute I gives rise to my individual I and to the not-my-individual-I then I have no need of the material world, or for that matter, I have no need for other "I"s - I end up as an absolute solipsist.

Agotnes and Moven (2001:212-213) note that Schlegel took his criticism of Fichte even further than Jacobi. Schegel understands that the fact that Fichte's doctrine ends up in absolute solipsism has a related implication. Schegel understands that since the individual ends up on his own, this causes the individual to be unable to fulfil or construct his individual project, i.e. the

formation of his character and the pursuing of his plans for himself. This is so because the individual must interact with reality, the individual needs to bend out into the world, the individual needs to reach out for reality, and then bend back upon himself, back into his own reflexions, if he is to be able to complete the formation of his individual project. And according to the strong idealist reading this interaction with reality becomes an impossibility.

Recently, both of the classical and the strong idealist readings have been discredited and have been, by and large, replaced by a modern reading after the works of commentators such as Breazeale (1993), Pippin (2000), Zöller (1998), Neuhouser (1990) and Henrich (1982, 2003), Beiser (2002). I understand that this modern reading is a variation of Jacobi's reading. According to this reading the Absolute I is the activity and spontaneity of the mind that enables the individual I to arise. This individual I in turn meets with a not-I, with reality, so that a subject-object relation is established and thus providing the foundations for knowledge. Note here that according to this reading the Absolute I does not create the not-I as the strong idealist reading holds. In other words, according to this interpretation the mind is sheer activity and it is spontaneous, that is, one cannot switch off the activity and spontaneity of one's mind. This activity and spontaneity gives rise to one's particular self, that is, through this activity and spontaneity one comes to realise that one is always thinking. But in order for one to gain knowledge and achieve self-consciousness one needs contact with a not-I, with reality, so that the subject-object relation is established and the proper conditions for knowledge and self-consciousness is well grounded. Let us put this issue in this way: If one were not to meet with a not-I, if one were to be put into some sort of cocoon and deprived from any and all sense-perception then one would be just an active particular mind without the ability of gaining knowledge and of being self-conscious. Thus according to this reading, Fichte does not have any

ontological claim about the world, as the strong idealist holds, Fichte is not saying that the Absolute I *actually* creates the individual I and the not-I; rather, Fichte's Absolute I has only an epistemological function, that is, it provides the proper foundations for the individual I, i.e. the self-conscious I that accompanies all representations, to establish the subject-object relation with reality and thus gain knowledge. Zöller (1998:36) corroborates:

> The I is here portrayed as self-enclosed to the point of seeming totally self-sufficient and a world unto its own. Yet the self-sufficiency in question is not the ontological independence or self-sufficiency of a divine mind, but the *epistemological isolation of a finite intelligence* that originally knows only itself, including its own states, and that derives all other knowledge from the experience of its own finitude. Viewed that way, Fichte's account of experience is an effort to derive the consciousness of external objects from the limitations that the I encounters in its original, intellectual intuition. [my italics]

Note that the problem of solipsism does not arise here, as noted by Kolias (2000:131), that is, when the individual I finds its limits, when it encounters the not-individual-I, when it encounters reality, it becomes aware that it is not a sole entity as it encounters other human beings, i.e. entities that appear to behave in a rational manner, and things, i.e. entities that appear not to behave in a rational manner, in reality. Also note here that the problem of bridging the gap between the subject and the object does not arise. As previously mentioned, the Kantian system was plagued by this problem as it did not explain how the intuitions, the sense-perceptions of objects interacted with the categories, the structures of the mind. For Fichte this is not a problem

since the mind is always active and spontaneous and as such it is always encountering reality. This encountering is dependent on what Fichte calls the *Anstoss*, the check, the limitation, the challenge that reality impinges on the activity of the individual I. When the individual I encounters reality, the individual I perceives reality as an obstacle, it perceives reality impinging on its activities. And I quote Fichte (1970:212) defining the *Anstoss* as:

> The *Anstoss* (which is not posited by the positing I) occurs to the I insofar as it is active, and is thus an *Anstoss* only insofar as the I is active. Its possibility is conditioned by the activity of the I: no activity of the I, no *Anstoss*. And vice versa: the I's activity of determining itself would, in turn, be conditioned by the *Anstoss*: no *Anstoss*, no self-determination. Moreover, no self-determination, nothing objective....

Thus, the activity of the individual I over reality, and reality's impinging on the individual I is what establishes the subject-object relation that gives rise to knowledge. I quote Breazeale (1993:99) who explains this rather nicely:

> The task of somehow bridging the gap between the conscious self and the objective world is simply not a problem that can arise within the context of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, which considers the synthetic link between self and world, freedom and *Anstoss*, to be a fundamental condition for the very possibility of self-consciousness.

I note that Fichte's position here, I mean the way he bridges the gap between subject and object, is very similar to Spinoza's. Lloyd (1994:28-30) notes that Spinoza holds:

> Bodies are more or less powerful according to their capacity to sustain and benefit from a variety of activities without surrendering their own distinctive ratios of motion and rest. The superiority of the human body over others resides in the fact that it is "affected in a great many ways by external bodies, and is disposed to affect external bodies in a great many ways" (II P14 Dem). This makes it possible for the body to maintain its individuality throughout a wide variety of change...Human life...is a struggle between activity and passivity, autonomy and dependence, freedom and bondage.

Thus for Spinoza, the individual, the mind and body that forms an individual is always active and it is always interacting with the environment that it is inserted in. This interaction is what yields knowledge, all three kinds of knowledge, viz. opinion, reason and intuition (NB. see below pp.109-111 where I discuss these three kinds of knowledge in more detail). Without the interaction, without the encounter with reality, there could not be knowledge. The passage quoted describing Spinoza's position could have easily been mistaken for a passage describing Fichte's position. Therefore, both Spinoza and Fichte understand that knowledge can only be produced through the interaction of an individual's mind with reality. This fact places them apart from the usual pre-Kantian understanding that knowledge of reality can be gained through concepts alone (i.e. the rationalist conception) or through sense-perceptions alone (i.e. the empiricist conception). Certainly, Kant had realised that both the rationalist and empiricist

conception are not opposing, but complementary positions (vide supra chapter on Kant). Kant, however, failed to devise a unified system as Spinoza had done before him, and as Fichte did after him.

Note also that this reading fits well with the wider picture of the time (just as the strong idealist does). That is, it fits well with the fact that Kant was trying to solve the enlightenment crisis and that the Critique of Pure Reason was trying to lay down the foundations of knowledge - the modern reading seems to fit well in this scenario as it understands that Fichte is also laying down the foundations for knowledge. Fichte lays down the foundations of knowledge in a unified system, a system unified in the Absolute I, which is in direct contrast with Kant's dualistic system. Fichte offers us a monistic philosophy, just as Spinoza did. But by monistic here it is not meant a system based on one substance; rather, it is meant that there is an absolute principle, the Absolute I, which is sheer activity and spontaneity, and which is the basis for all rationality. Pippin (2000:164) corroborates this when he says that "if there is a "monism" emerging in the post-Kantian philosophical world, the kind proposed by Fichte...is what might be called a normative monism, a claim for the "absolute" or unconditioned status of the space of reasons".

Following from what I have discussed thus far, I wish to propose that the classical reading of Schelling and Hegel and the modern reading of Breazeale, Pippin, Zöller and Henrich could be seen as complementary readings. That is, these readings capture different aspects of the Fichtean system: the classical reading focus on the relation between the finite entities with the infinite/Absolute, and the modern reading focuses on the relation between the finite entity with the other finite entities. This fact becomes very apparent if one reads Fichte as a Spinozist. In Spinoza we also find those two kinds of intercourse, the relation between the finite with the

infinite and between the finite with other finite things. Gatens and Lloyd (1999:47) have noted this fact rather well in the following passage:

> We have, on the one hand, the relation of dependence which binds each individual necessarily to Substance as one of its modes; and, on the other, the causality of external forces which binds the individual to other finite modes. But the two kind of dependence interlock. It is only through the meditating force of other finite modes which impinge on it that the individual has access to the sustaining power of Substance. It is only as a finite individual among other finite individuals - made vulnerable but also sustained by their collective power - that the individual exists. The shift between the two stories enacts Spinoza's treatment of the interconnections between contingency and necessity bondage and freedom.

Hence, if Fichte is read as a Spinozist, it is possible to make sense of both the classical and modern readings as complementary. In the classical reading, the Absolute I is indeed God who acts as the guarantor that the subjective can successfully enact in the objective. But this reading is just half of the picture. The question how a subjective entity is able to gain knowledge of objective reality has still to be answered. This question is answered by the modern reading. The Absolute I in this reading is sheer rational and spontaneous activity, an activity that gives rise to, that is the foundation of, individual "I"s. Through this sheer activity the individual "I"s are able to realise that they are always thinking, they become self-aware, and as such they become aware that there are limits to their self-awareness. They realise that they are able to interact with certain entities, i.e. other individual "I"s and objects, other than themselves and as such they are

able to establish a connection with these entities. This connection is what enables them to gain knowledge of reality. Support for my proposal here can be found in the fact that both readings are supported by different writings and passages within the *Wissenschaftslehre* project. The canon of the project encompasses some 17 writings or versions of these writings and as such it is possible to conceive that Fichte sometimes referred to the concept of the Absolute I as God and other times to the Absolute I as sheer rational and spontaneous activity.

The last point I wish to make in this section concerns all three interpretations of the concept of the Absolute I. Generally speaking, commentators in philosophy encyclopaedias or in basic and introductory texts on Fichte, Schelling and Hegel understand these philosophers as being absolute idealists. In these introductory texts there is a common understanding that Fichte, Schelling and Hegel hold the view that empirical objects do not exist independently of the human mind, and as such Fichte, Schelling and Hegel reject transcendental realism; rather, for Fichte, Schelling and Hegel these objects are 'appearances' and therefore dependent, in some sense, on the human mind, and as such they are considered to be idealists. But these introductory texts on Fichte, Schelling and Hegel also hold that these philosophers assert that objects are not merely 'appearances' for us, rather objects are also appearances in some sort of absolute mind (e.g. Hegel's Geist, which is probably the most famous example here), and as such this common reading of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel understands that these philosophers are not transcendental or subjective idealists but absolute idealists. Now, to refer back to those three interpretations of the concept of the Absolute I. The classical interpretation falls well within this common understanding of Fichte being an absolute idealist as the Absolute I is God, who creates the whole of reality, relative "I"s and nature as a not-I. The strong-idealist and the modern interpretation (i.e. those interpretations in which the absolute I is the rationality and spontaneity

of the human mind), however, do not fall within this common understanding of Fichte as an absolute idealist. According to the strong-idealist and modern interpretations, I understand, Fichte should be read as a transcendental or subjective idealist, just as is Kant. In fact Beiser (2002:355) does ouvertly interpret Fichte as a transcendental or subjective idealist, thus rejecting the view that Fichte was an absolute idealist; and Henrich (1982:42), who defends the modern reading, puts forward the view that when Fichte says that the concept of the self is a manifestation of God Fichte is trying to make the concept of the self intelligible through the concept of God, that is, both concepts are self-creating, are *causa sui*, and thus they are not dependent on anything else. I quote:

> Fichte...was convinced that his theory can yield insight into the ground of the Self; according to him, the Self is a manifestation of God. It looks as though Fichte is now furnishing a cause for freedom in just the way Kant viewed it and which cannot really be brought into harmony with Fichte's basic insight. Yet he was not suffering a mental lapse when he offered this explanation. Fichte wants to make the essence of the Self precise and intelligible with the help of the concept of God. This takes place as follows: Self-consciousness is an intimate unity arising from an inconceivable ground which the Self does not control. At the same time, the Self makes itself manifest to itself. It possesses itself *as* Self, and must acquire additional knowledge of itself in the course of performing its characteristic activity.

Henrich explanation is very persuasive, and Beiser (2002:284-288) makes this same point agreeing with Henrich. However, I find it extremely puzzling the fact that Schelling and Hegel understood the Absolute I as being God, and thus not as an analogy of the concept of God. Therefore, I ask the question here: 'How could Schelling and Hegel have understood Fichte's system so wrong given that they were peers and communicate often?' Nevertheless, I understand that if further support for the strong-idealist or modern interpretation is gathered, then, perhaps, the common understanding of Fichte as an absolute idealist must be relinquished, and Fichte should then be placed side by side with Kant as a transcendental or subjective idealist, and leaving Schelling and Hegel as the sole absolute idealists of post-Kantian German philosophy. The debate here will be fought over by those who defend a metaphysical reading of Fichte and who read his philosophy as a direct development of Kant's Critical Philosophy, and who understand that Fichte, and the other absolute Idealists, have disregarded Kant's advice that we should not engage with concepts of which we can have no experience (instances of this are Fichte's *Absolute I*, Schelling's *Absolute*, and Hegel's *Geist*), and those who have a non-metaphysical reading of Fichte and who interpret his philosophy as having some powerful insights into some of the problems which are still troublesome for contemporary philosophy (an instance of this is the modern reading of Fichte's Absolute I which deals with epistemological issues and which could be seen as an attempt to re-establish foundationalism).

To conclude this section. I have demonstrated that the Enlightenment crisis posed a threat to metaphysical enquiry, to the attainment of knowledge and to morality. Kant attempted to solve this crisis with the publication of his *First* Critique which aimed at demonstrating how knowledge can be attained, what can be known, and how metaphysical enquiry is possible. Unfortunately, Kant's attempt was not successful, as his system was plagued by dichotomies and

inconsistencies. Fichte picked up where Kant had left off; in his *Wissenschaftslehre* project he attempted to answer those same questions that Kant had previously tackled. I have also argued that the Fichtean system is unified in the concept of the Absolute I, and thus, it could be said that Fichte offers us a system that is more systematic than the one Kant had previously presented us with. I believe that due to Fichte's difficult language and writing style commentators have diverged on their interpretations of the concept of Absolute I. I have also demonstrated that all three main interpretations are consistent with the fact that Fichte was trying to answer the same questions as Kant and solve the Enlightenment crisis, as well as demonstrating that all three interpretations are consistent with the fact the Fichte searched in Spinoza for the answers to the problems he faced. Lastly, I proposed that the classical reading and the modern reading could be seen as complementary readings, especially if Fichte is read as a Spinozist.

DETERMINISM AND FREEDOM

In this subsection I wish to deal with the issue of determinism and freedom since I understand that Fichte's and Spinoza's treatment of this issue are very similar. This may strike the reader as rather strange because *prima facie* the Kantian and general German Idealist conception of freedom as self-determination seems to be at odds with Spinoza's conception of freedom as connected with an insight into necessity. In the following paragraphs I shall demonstrate that this is not the case insofar as Fichte's treatment of the topic at hand is concerned.

I have already mentioned at the beginning of this chapter that Fichte, during his early academic years, devoted much time to the study of Spinoza's Ethics as he had become convinced

that determinism was a sound theory. It is worth at this point quoting again a passage from Green (1978:1-2):

> like both Schelling and Hegel, the other leading Idealist philosophers,...began as a student of theology, though his subsequent career earned him a reputation primarily as a philosopher. He was eighteen years old when he enrolled as a theological student at the University of Jena in 1780. Neither there nor in his subsequent studies at Wittenberg and Leipzig did he devote himself to a study of Kant's philosophy, the crowning works of which were coming into print during these years. Rather, he seems to have become convinced of the truth of determinism, especially as articulated in Spinoza's Ethics. The struggle to free himself from a deterministic view of the world began during his student years and remained a major motive throughout his subsequent life and writings...

It was some ten years later, in 1790, that Fichte discovered Kant's critical philosophy. Fichte saw in the *First* Critique the solution to many philosophical problems, the problem of determinism included. The Kantian critical philosophy offered human beings rational freedom, i.e. the ability to rationally and freely choose a course of action, without giving up the idea that reality, i.e. the natural world, was somehow determined by necessary natural laws. It is worth quoting again a passage from a letter dated August-September 1790 of Fichte to his friend Weisshuhn. I quote Fichte (1993:357):

> ...I have been living in a new world ever since reading the *Critique of Pure Reason.* Propositions which I thought could never be overturned have been overturned for me. Things have been proven to me which I thought could never be proven, for example, the concept of absolute freedom, the concept of duty, etc. and I feel all the happier for it. It is unbelievable how much respect for mankind and how much strength this system gives us.

Much of Fichte's talk on determinism is found in his first published book, the Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation - ACAR, and thus I shall start by referring to his views in this work.[9]

Fichte's argument in the ACAR is by and large very close to Kant's argument in the Critique of Practical Reason and Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone, although Fichte does work it out in some finer detail as he develops it further. According to Fichte's argument, the first step towards morality is taken when one recognises that one's will has a right over whatever is neither forbidden by nor against the moral law. But one has also to recognise that in some particular cases one has to forfeit such a right. For instance, all human beings have a right

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[9] NB. The story of the publication of his work is perhaps better known than the work itself, since it was written as a sort of self-introductory note from Fichte to Kant. Kant thought the ACAR was a well written piece of work, and suggested that Fichte should sell it to Kant's own publisher. The first edition had very strange omissions: the title, publisher, city and date appeared as usual, but Fichte's name and signed preface were missing in this edition. Whether this was due to a true printing mistake, or a cunning device by the publisher, one will never know. The second, and subsequent editions corrected these errors and acknowledged Fichte's authorship. But by the time this was done, the ACAR, had already proven to be a huge success, partly because it was assumed by book reviewers and readers as yet another of Kant's works. The written style, the terminology (including the *Critique* on the title), the fact that it was published by Kant's own publisher, and especially the fact that it had been widely expected that Kant was soon to publish a *Critique* of religion, all led to the conclusion that Kant was the author of the ACAR. Thus, the ACAR put Fichte under the spotlight and launched his career as a prominent philosopher, which culminated with his appointment as professor of the chair of Critical Philosophy, a post previously held by Reinhold, at the University of Jena in 1794.

to life since one's life is neither forbidden by nor is it against the moral law. But a situation may arise where it will be morally required that a human being give up his life so that other human beings may live; in other words, it may be the case that one has to give up one's right for the benefit of some higher good. If we take the above instance at face value, it appears that the moral law is contradicting itself because it affirms that one has a right to whatever is neither forbidden by nor against the moral law, and yet it is open to cases where such rights may be forfeited for the benefit of a higher good and thus it may be rendered irrational. Fichte (1978:60) is aware of this problem as he maintains that:

> We deduce...from the requirement of the moral law that it not contradict itself by abrogating its justifications of the sensuous impulse (will), an indirect lawfulness of this impulse itself and *a perfect congruency of the fortunes of rational beings with their moral dispositions, which is thereby to be assumed.* [my brackets, my italics]

To paraphrase Fichte here: the moral dispositions of rational agents must have the chance of being implemented in the natural world, otherwise the moral law is only an empty promise. And following from this is the assumption *"it must be possible to conceive of an ultimate goal in which there will be...a situation in which the right to happiness of one who acts morally is finally vindicated"*, as noted Green (1978:9). This ultimate goal is the highest good, which is a continuous and eternal striving towards happiness through a virtuous and morally law abiding

life.[10] And in order for this to be possible, one must postulate the existence of a God who ensures that the right to pursue the highest good is not a merely empty formality within the realm of practical reason, but also a possibility in the natural world. As Fichte (1978:60-61,119-120) puts it:

> The existence of a God is thus to be assumed just as certainly as a moral law: there is a God...God must...produce that complete congruency between the morality and the happiness of finite moral beings...God is to be thought of, in accordance with the postulates of reason, as that being who determines nature in conformity with the moral law.

It is thus left to God to "promote eternally the highest good in all rational natures, and to establish eternally the balance between morality and happiness". Note here that God is both the guarantor that the moral law, one's moral choices, can be effectively enacted in the natural world and that God is also the guarantor that the highest good will eventually be achieved. These are different, but connected issues. Thus far Fichte's argument is very akin to Kant's but there are some contrasting features between Kant's and Fichte's treatment of the topic which will be pointed out in the following paragraphs. It is worth re-stating here that both Kant and Fichte were concerned about the implications of determinism for morality. Kant's concern with determinism was mainly due to the enlightenment crisis and the emerging trend towards

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[10] NB. In the ACAR Fichte is still under the spell of Kant and as such he holds that the summum bonum is happiness. Later, however, when he starts to mature his own philosophical system he holds that the summum bonum is a continuous striving towards perfection, and I shall come back to this point when I deal with Fichte's "Morality for Scholars" lectures in chapter 6 where I deal with ethical issues.

Spinozism during his lifetime as the pantheism controversy demonstrated. Fichte's concern about determinism is a direct result of his early Spinozism and the deterministic implications that come with it, and which later lead him to embrace Kantianism in an attempt to overturn determinism.

It is at this point Fichte's argument takes a different direction form Kant's, and this causes Fichte to move closer to Spinoza. Let us now see how this is done. Fichte (1978:61) explains his views further by arguing that the existence of a God who ensures that one's pursuit of the highest good is a possibility in the natural world is necessary because:

> So long as finite beings remain finite, they will continue to stand...under other laws than those of reason. Consequently, they will never be able to produce by themselves the complete congruency of happiness with morality. The moral law, however, requires this quite unconditionally. Therefore, this law can never cease to be valid, since it will never be achieved; its claim can never end, since it will never be fulfilled. It is valid for eternity.

In the passage quoted above Fichte's concern over determinism is clearly demonstrated, as it implies that human beings, as finite beings, are under the influence of laws other than those of reason, i.e. natural laws. This premise is somehow in contrast to Kant's views, since Kant understood that human beings are completely self-determined entities because human reason operates within the noumenal realm and thus human reason is not constrained by the causality that operates in the phenomenal realm. Thus, Fichte agrees with Kant than human reason is self-determined but he disagrees with Kant than human beings are completely shielded from the

forces that govern reality. The reader will recall that in the *Wissenschaftslehre* project Fichte develops this idea further since he argues that there is a constant interaction between the individual-I and the not-I, where the individual-I bends into reality and reality impinges one the individual-I. There is a constant 'tug-of-war' between the individual-I's and reality. And I shall come back to this point in chapter 6 where I discuss the topic of ethics.

I emphasise here that Fichte understands that we are free beings because of two issues: i. because our cognitive capacities are autonomous, because we are able to make free informed decisions; and ii. because God guarantees that our moral choices can be enacted in the world. The claim about God will be dealt with below in the subsection entitled 'the concept of God' of chapter 5. For now let us concentrate on the issue concerning the claim that one is free because one is a rational self-determined being (i.e. one is able to make free choices through the use of reasoning, through making an informative decision using all knowledge available to one to reach a rational decision in a given situation) - and in this sense the agent is autonomous and Fichte agrees with Kant here; but that one is also under the influence of the natural laws that reign in the physical world - and in this sense the agent is in danger of being overwhelmed by external forces and Fichte here further develops Kant's critical philosophy, since Kant never contemplated this issue in this writings. It is clear thus that Fichte holds that i. human reason is automonous; ii. that determinism is true of reality; and iii. that human beings are in a constant interaction with reality, an interaction in which human reason tries to overcome reality and vice versa. This point about the interaction between human reason and interaction is crucial here since it implies that human beings are in a constant effort of trying to understand and make sense of reality. It is only by comprehending reality that human beings can try to overcome the forces of reality - although

this can never be entirely successful for a human being can never comprehend the whole of reality due to their finite composition.

Fichte's position here is somehow akin to Spinoza's views as I shall demonstrate. Spinoza understands that one gains freedom through the use of reason (which is an autonomous capacity that human beings as individual modes possess) and through attaining knowledge of the natural world. That is, Spinoza holds the view that everything that happens, happens necessarily but that human beings can free themselves from the necessity that governs the natural world if they use their reasoning in the right manner, i.e. if they gain (more and more) proper knowledge of the natural world; that is, human beings can become free through understanding their place in the order of things, through understanding the forces of reality that act upon themselves as individual modes of the substance that they are. Let me explain Spinoza's view in some detail. Spinoza's conception of freedom is grounded on his epistemology. That is to say, Spinoza understands that there are three kinds of knowledge, (which, in Spinoza terms, is to be understood that there are three distinct ways that one can gain knowledge) viz. i. opinion or imagination (*opinio sive imaginatio*), ii. reason (*ratio*), and iii. intuition (*scientia intuitiva*). The lowest kind of knowledge, i.e. opinion or imagination, is the kind of knowledge which is gained from one's sense perception. Spinoza maintains that this kind of knowledge is the one that yields most errors, since the events that can affect one's body and mind do not follow a logical sequence, and therefore this kind of knowledge cannot provide us with a proper account of the external world since it is based on what Spinoza calls inadequate ideas, i.e. ideas that do not convey certainty. The second kind of knowledge, i.e. reason, is obtained through reasoning and adequate ideas, i.e. ideas that convey certainty because they guarantee their own truth, e.g. Mathematics. A mathematical proof is a paradigm of this kind of knowledge because if one

follows a mathematical proof step by step, if one understands these steps along the way, then at the end of the proof one will understand that the result necessarily follows from the steps taken along the proof; one is able to say that one grasps the reasoning, the adequate ideas, behind this proof. The third kind of knowledge, i.e. intuition, is achieved by a direct insight into the truth of an adequate idea, that is, intuitive knowledge occurs when one understands an adequate idea without the help of any argument or proposition. Spinoza puts this in term of being able to make a connection between the mode that is being understood and the substance, or in other words, intuitive knowledge occurs when one is able to make a connection between the parts to the whole or when one has an insight into the very essence of a thing. These three kinds of knowledge are perhaps better understood with the aid of an example. Let us imagine that one is given a series of numbers, e.g. 15, 30, X, 60, and asked to find the value of the X in the series. If one attempts to do this through the first kind of knowledge one only looks at the series, and without the aid of rational steps, tries to guess the value of X; guessing as we know is not a very reliable way of attaining knowledge and it often yields incorrect premises. But if one goes through the series trying to work out the value of X using a step by step procedure one is using the second kind of knowledge. This is a more reliable way of attaining knowledge because of the use of rational steps that guarantee that the conclusion will follow from the premises. In some circumstances, however, the series will be so easy that one has an spontaneous insight about the value of X and thus one does not have to do a step by step proof, one just knows the value of X, one makes the connection between X and the other numbers in the series automatically, and this is the third kind of knowledge.

Spinoza understands that freedom arises when the mind uses the second and third kind of knowledge, viz., reason and intuition, that is, when one uses these kinds of knowledge it

comprehends that everything happens in reality happens out of necessity and that there is no room for contingency. The implication of this is that freedom is achieved through comprehending the forces that govern reality and by understanding and accepting the limitations of one's nature or essence. Corroborating this is the following passage from Spinoza's Letter LVIII to GH Schuller. I quote Spinoza (1928:295):

> Let us, however, descend to created things, which are all determined by external causes to exist, and so act in a definite and determined manner...let us think of a very simple thing. For instance, a stone receives from external cause, which impels it, a certain quantity of motion, with which it will afterwards necessarily continue to move when the impact of the external cause has ceased. This continuance of the stone in its motion is compelled, not because it is necessary, but because it must be defined by the impact of an external cause. What is here said of the stone must be understood of each individual thing, however composite and however adapted to various ends it may be thought to be: that is, that each thing is necessarily determined by an external cause to exist and to act in a definite and determined manner. Next, conceive...that the stone while it continues in motion thinks, and knows that is striving as much as possible to continue in motion. Surely, this stone, in as much as it is conscious only of its own effort, and is far from indifferent, will believe that it is completely free, and that it continues in motion for no other reason than because it wants to. And such is human freedom which all men boast that they possess, and which consists solely

> of this, that men are conscious of their desire, and ignorant of the causes by which they are determined.

This passage shows Spinoza's determinism. But as I mention previously Spinoza also says that one can reconcile a sense of freedom with these necessary forces that act upon one if one uses one's power of reasoning and gains knowledge of the second and third kind. Hence for Spinoza the more one sees things as necessary, the more one understands the world around us through the second and third kind of knowledge, the more one increases one's power over them, and so the more one is free - the free agent, for Spinoza, is one who is conscious of the external forces which necessarily act upon one. For instance, in the case of human beings, to understand that human beings are physically incapable of flying because it is not in a human being's nature to physically fly, is to understand the order of things and to become freer. Freedom, for Spinoza, comes from proper and adequate knowledge.

Thus, both Spinoza and Fichte hold that determinism is true insofar as the natural world is concerned. But both philosophers also understand that one's cognitive powers, one's reasoning can make a difference in setting one free from those necessary forces acting in the natural world and that necessarily act upon one in one way or another. There is a sense of freedom in both Fichte and Spinoza where the agent is free to the extend that the agent is able to act upon reality rather than being acted upon by the forces in reality. For them human reason is an autonomous capacity but since human beings are inserted in reality human beings are constantly being acted upon by the forces that characterise reality. As such the more a human being understands reality and is able to act upon reality and minimilise the affects of reality upon his individual self, the more the individual is free. I understand that this view sets them apart from most philosophers,

since most philosophers tend to either subscribe to the view that determinism is true or to the view that human beings are free; most philosophers, however, do not subscribe to both views. The only philosophical school to subscribe to determinism and to reconcile it with some sort of freedom, a kind of freedom that is achieved through understanding the most that one possibly can of the world is the Stoic tradition. The similarities between Spinozism and Stoicism have already been noted by commentators such as Gatens and Lloyd (1999). In fact anyone who is familiar with both systems cannot help but to recognise the resemblance. The interesting fact here is that none of Fichte's commentators has inferred that Fichte falls in this same tradition. I would like to suggest here, following what has been said in this subsection, that Fichte, as does Spinoza, falls in this same philosophical tradition, namely Stoicism, even if only insofar as Fichte's views on determinism and freedom are concerned. I will come back to the issue of Stoicism below in chapter 6 when I discuss Fichte's and Spinoza's ethical views.

CHAPTER 5: THEOLOGY AND RELIGION

TWO ISSUES: STRUCTURE AND TREATMENT OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGION

In this subsection I wish to draw the reader's attention to two issues. The first issue concerns the structure of Fichte's and Spinoza's philosophical systems. Both philosophers start their philosophical systems with theological truths and from these truths they attempt to build their metaphysical views and these metaphysical views bring about some ethical implications (NB chapter 6 deals with the issue of ethics). The second issue concerns their treatment of theology and religion. Both philosophers draw a distinction between theology and religion, and then between natural and revealed religion.[11] In order to deal with these two issues here, I must carry on discussing Fichte's views on the ACAR, but I shall also refer to other works of Fichte when appropriate.

After demonstrating his concern over the issue of determinism, Fichte takes Kant's views on morality even further through a detailed discussion on theology, natural religion and revealed religion, and the relation that these have with morality. This point has been noted by Green (1978:12-18), Copleston (1999:76-77) and Adamson (1881:27-28), and I shall draw on their writings to deal with this issue. Up to this point, Fichte (and Kant) had demonstrated that the possibility of the moral law implies the existence of a God, who acts as the guarantor of both the natural world and the moral law, and who also acts as the guarantor for the possibility of the

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[11] NB. I know it is contentious whether Fichte had a metaphysical system or not. I, however, understand that it could be said that Fichte has a metaphysical system, at least insofar as the new Kantian metaphysics is concerned. That is to say that Fichte understood that metaphysics is an enquiry into the nature of reality, just as Spinoza did; Fichte however takes this as an enquiry

enactment of the moral law in the natural world. From this point on Fichte takes the argument further than did Kant. Fichte understood that morality revolves around the concept of God, the concept of soul and the concept of immortality; in the ACAR Fichte (1978:63) characterises these concepts of God, soul and immortality as theological truths; Fichte characterises these concepts as being "these truths...which we needed in order not to set our theoretical convictions and our practical determinations of the will in contradiction." Fichte holds that without this theology one's moral dispositions, i.e. one's theoretical convictions, would not be guaranteed as having a real possibility of enactment in the natural world, i.e. its practical determinations. Fichte's next move is to introduce the distinction between theology and religion. I quote Fichte (1978:63):

> How does then religion arise out of theology? Theology is mere science, dead information without practical influence; religion, however, according to the meaning of the word (*religio*), is supposed to be something that *binds* us and binds even *more strongly* than we were without it.

Copleston (1999:76-77) explains this point:

> ...in his essay...he attempted to develop Kant's point of view. In particular he made a distinction between theology and religion. The idea of the possibility of a moral law demands belief in God not only as the power which dominates Nature and is able to synthesise virtue and happiness but also as the complete

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into rationality, experience and morality, whilst Spinoza understood this as an enquiry into the

> embodiment of the moral ideal, as the all holy Being and supreme Good. But assent to propositions about God (such as God is holy and just) is not the same as religion which according to the meaning of the word [religio] should be something which binds us, and indeed binds us more strongly than we should otherwise be bound. And this binding is derived from the acceptance of the rational moral law as God's law, as the expression of the divine will.

The question one ought to ask here is: Why does Fichte think that one needs religion? Why isn't theology enough? In order to answer these questions I must recapitulate Fichte's argument this far. Fichte understands that the moral law is a self-imposed law that reason imposes on itself so that the freedom of the will is safeguarded, and thus the moral law cannot be answerable to any external law. Moreover, Fichte also notes that God acts as the guarantor that the moral law can be enacted in the natural world as well as being the guarantor that ultimately the summum bonum will be achieved. Following from this Fichte holds that insofar as the content of God's commandments are concerned (i.e. the divine law) it must be exactly the same as the content of the moral law that reason imposes on itself, because the moral law cannot be answerable to anything external to it. The implication of this is that it seems to follow that, from a moral perspective, it would make no difference whether one understands that one is acting according to the moral law that reason imposes on oneself or whether one is acting according to the divine law. Fichte (1978:70) describes this possibility as follows:

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nature of being.

> Now if reason presents the will of God to us as completely identical with its own law, it certainly obligates us indirectly to obey it also; but this obligation is based on nothing but its agreement with its own law, and no obedience to God is possible except out of obedience to reason. Now from this it is clear in the first place that it does not matter at all even for the morality of our actions whether we consider ourselves obligated to something because our reason commands it or because God commands it.

Green (1978:10) notes that "the concept of divine law then appears to be utterly superfluous. Religion which by definition must have a binding causal influence on our moral will, therefore seems to be impossible. How can religion introduce anything new into the situation without thereby threatening the autonomy of the moral law." Is theology enough then? Fichte answers in the negative. But why? The answer to the question "why is theology not enough?" and the reason why religion is necessary rests on Fichte's understanding of human nature. Fichte is a pessimist insofar as human nature is concerned. Fichte understands that evil is ingrained within human nature, and thus, by and large, human beings are bound to stray away from the moral law.[12] Within this context, it becomes clear why Fichte understands that theology is not enough

[12] NB. I presume Fichte's views here have their foundation on the Christian belief of original sin. Contrasting with Fichte's views are the views of the later Schelling, who understood that evil has a metaphysical foundation in reality because both Satan (the force of chaos, or disharmony) and Jesus (the force of creation, or harmony) were begotten by God and as such these two forces, viz. chaos and creation, are always at play in reality; and as such evil is not ingrained in human nature and is not a condition bestowed on humanity because of Adam and Eve's original sin. It is worthy quoting the following two passages of Lawrence (2004:173; 175), where he explains Schelling's views well: *"Radical evil must...be derivative. The evil self was not evil before it made itself so. For that reason 'its making itself so' cannot be thought of as a simple act of self-constitution. If it is derivative, however, it is not derivative of anything in the field of experience and beyond the horizon within which the self constitutes itself as itself. Its grounds is rooted in*

and why Religion is necessary. That is to say, that since human beings are bound to stray away from the moral law, then they are in need of something that would ascertain that they would not stray away. This is religion. Religion is a way of binding human beings to the moral law. Any human being who strays away from the moral law can be re-connected to it through religion, or any human being who is about to stray away from the moral law can be prevented from breaking up the connection with the moral law through religion also. Note here that Fichte seems to be using the etymology of the word religion, the Latin *re-ligare*, which in its original sense means to re-connect. In Fichte, religion is what re-connects human beings to the moral law, or what prevents human beings from breaking up the connection with the moral law. I also note here that Fichte's move from theology and to religion leaves open the possibility that perhaps religion is not a necessary thing for all human beings. That is, Fichte's argument here leaves open the possibility that there are some human beings who are able to conquer or suppress evil solely through a strict understanding of the moral law so that religion is redundant for them.

Fichte's next move is, following the Enlightenment's terminology, to make a distinction between natural and revealed religion. Fichte (1978:77-78) says "Theology becomes religion, in its most universal meaning, whenever the proposition assumed by the law of reason for determining our will operates upon us practically...This can be conceived as possible in two

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nature, creeping up on us from behind,..., a burden placed on us by nature, pre-conscious punishment for pre-conscious sin" and *"Evil does not arise 'ex nihilo'. It is not the simple play of selfshness, but the self-deception and cruelty that surfaces when we blame suffering, originally a function of the limits imposed on us by nature, on something that we are able to 'control'. To attain my selfish desire, I work to frustrate the desire of other. It is a conception that clearly leaves rooms for different modalities of evil. From Schelling's point of view, evil already exists in the epistemological act whereby the knowing subject casts all nature outside of itself, transforming it into an object of scientific understanding and technological manipulation".* For a detailed discussion on Schelling's and Kant's views on the issue of 'evil' see JP Lawrence, "Schelling's Metaphysics of Evil", in The New Schelling, eds. Norman, J., and Welchman, A., London and New York, Continuum, 2004.

ways: namely, that it has taken place either *in us* as moral beings, in our rational nature, or *outside it.*" Thus far, Fichte's argument only provides support to natural religion, as it only establishes religion as a rational event *in us*, an event by which one experiences reverence for the moral law, since one needs to postulate the existence of God, souls and immortality so that the moral law that reason imposes on itself can be enacted in the natural world. Hence, thus far, Fichte's argument does not deal with religion as an event *outside us*, and as such it does not deal with the possibility of revealed religion. Interesting to note here is the fact that Kant had left the argument at this point also, that is Kant had not enquired into the possibility of revealed religion in his three *Critiques*. Since the argument thus far does not in any way establish the foundations to revealed religion, it was only logical that Fichte would attempt to take the argument a bit further and enquire into the possibility of revealed religion using the critical philosophy method and terminology, just as Kant had done with the possibility of knowledge. Adamson (1881:27-28) corroborates this, when he says:

> The possibility, then, of a natural or rational religion, if we employ terms which have unquestionably a certain ambiguity had been sufficiently shown, and the place determined which such a religion holds in the series of philosophical notions. But, so far, no result had appeared bearing upon the possibility of a revealed religion; and those fundamental features of human nature which historically have always been connected with the belief of revelation, the consciousness of imperfection, of sin, of dependence on supreme powers, apparently found no place in the Kantian scheme. Here, then, was an opportunity for the application of the critical principles. The possibility of a revelation might

> be investigated in the same fashion as the possibility of cognition at all; the form and the content of any revelation might be determined by an analysis of the conditions of its possibility, just as the form and the content of knowledge had been determined by an analysis of its conditions. A lacuna in the Kantian system would thus be filled up.

Fichte (1978:96) defines revelation as "the concept of an appearance effected in the sensuous world by the causality of God, through which he proclaims himself as moral lawgiver". Starting from this definition Fichte sets out to enquire into the possibility of revelation. He first enquires whether a revelation can be known through its form or, as he says, the way in which revelation is made known. He concludes that a revelation cannot be known through the way it is presented, i.e. through its form, because this incurs two problems, one a posteriori, the other a priori. The first problem faced by an investigation of the possibility of revelation insofar as its form is concerned is that it would incur the problem of searching for something noumenal in the phenomenal world. This is so, because human beings can never go beyond the sense perceptions or appearances presented to them, and thus, there is no way for a human being to know if an appearance is being caused by God himself, or by the ordinary empirical causes. In other words, a posteriori, there is no way for human beings to determine whether any given appearance is merely a normal appearance caused by the ordinary empirical causes or if that same appearance is being caused by God's intervention in the natural world. The second problem faced by such an enquiry is that from an analysis of the concept of God, one would have to demonstrate that within this concept is present a particular sort of revelation and that God is willing to present it, or to make it known, to human beings. That is, the concept of God would have to encompass a

specific form of revelation as well as God's willingness to present this to human beings, so that human beings would know a priori how to identify a revelation. For instance, let us imagine that the concept of God encompasses a particular kind of revelation, namely that whenever God reveals himself he does so by changing one's sense perceptions to a gold colour, i.e. one would see everything in shades of gold, and that God is willing to make this known to human beings, then if one were to see everything in shades of gold, one would know a priori that that was a revelation from God. Needless to say the concept of God does not encompass those required features.

By rejecting this alternative, Fichte is left with the possibility that a revelation can only be known by its content, or as he says, what is made known by revelation. As I mentioned above, Fichte understands that some human beings may stray away from the moral law because of the inherent evil present in human nature. Because of this inherent evil these human beings have their resolve to follow the moral law weakened, and thus, they would be in need of being shown the way back to the moral law. These human beings become too ingrained in the phenomenal world through their desires and wants. It follows from this that their reconnection with the moral law can only be done through revelation. That is, it can only be done through an intervention of God in the natural world, since any attempt to do it through the moral law itself would fall on deaf ears. Given this situation, Fichte establishes that God's revelation of himself is a desirable thing if it is possible at all. Important to note here is that the concept of a revelation cannot claim to be anything like the postulates for the existence of God, the soul and immortality, which rational beings assume as a necessary condition to their freedom and morality. The concept of revelation, rather, can only claim to be a desirable possibility, which occurs when God wishes to intervene in the natural world so that human beings who had lost

their reverence for the moral law can be guided back to it. Fichte's enquiry into the content of a revelation establishes that the criterion for determining the content of a possible revelation is that the content must neither contradict the moral law nor must it go beyond the moral law. If the content of an alleged revelation either contradicts or goes beyond the moral law, then it is to be rejected. But if it does not, then there is a possibility that it is a true revelation.

Such an understanding of revelation places all the responsibility of moral guidance with the individual, and this is in direct contrast with the more common understanding that a revelation needs to be approved and confirmed by an institution, such as the Church. In Fichte there is a shift of power from the institution and to the individual insofar as morality is concerned. No one is to be told by an institution whether their morality is right or wrong, or whether their understanding of the moral law (and the divine commandments) is correct; rather, these are the responsibility of the individual. Green (1978:16) corroborates this:

> Fichte's concept of religion contains no doctrine of the church at all. The arena of the moral struggle is the individual will, what Fichte calls the faculty of desire. Nowhere in his *Critique of All Revelation* does he show any particular concern for the social dimensions of either sin or religion. He claims at the end of his treatise to have secured the rights of individuals to acknowledge a revelation or not as they please. Fichte's greater optimism about man's ability to act morally without external support apparently precludes any doctrine of the church.

Following from my discussion thus far, it could be said that Fichte structures his philosophical system in the following manner: he makes a distinction between theology and religion, and then

he divides religion in natural religion and revealed religion. And I note that this is the same sort of taxonomy used by Spinoza. Spinozism also makes the distinction between theology and religion and between natural and revealed religion, which Spinoza calls purified and superstitious religion. Spinoza's theology is found in parts of the Tractatus, and in the Ethics. His theology is grounded in the understanding that there exists a sum of all existence, and as such it is absolutely infinite (for there is nothing outside itself to render it finite). This unique, highest form of Being Spinoza calls substance. Then, he identifies God as a substance, and later that God is Nature, the whole of nature, i.e. nature as the essence of all things, or the natura naturans, and nature as a physical system, or the natura naturata. It could be said that Spinoza's theology is a set of truths, which explain the nature, the form and the content of our reality and as such it is akin to Fichte's understanding that theology is a set of truths. Moreover, there is a crucial similarity between Spinoza's and Fichte's treatment of these theological truths; that is to say, that these truths are used to formulate their metaphysical systems, which in turn have ethical and political implications.[13]

Beginning from such an understanding of theology, Spinoza enquires into how religion arises from it (i.e. theology), and then he makes a distinction between purified and superstitious religion. Spinoza deals with the issue of purified religion in chapters 7 to 15 of the Tractatus. Spinoza understands that religion arises from theology, not because of human beings' inherent evil as Fichte holds, but because not all people can philosophise and achieve moral truths

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[13] NB. Both Spinoza and Fichte, like many of their contemporaries, understood that philosophy had to be systematic, i.e. out of one single principle one must be able to derive a whole philosophical system. Thus one of those theological truths is a first principle for these philosophers. For Spinoza such a principle is the concept of substance, and God is a substance; for Fichte, such a concept is the Absolute I, and either God (in the classical reading) or the self (in the modern reading) is the Absolute I. I will deal with this issue again below in the section on 'the concept of God'.

through reasoning. In this sense, Spinoza is not a pessimist about human nature, but an elitist. I also mentioned above that Spinoza divides religion into revealed and natural religion or superstitious and purified religion, as he calls it. Spinoza understands that if one strips the scriptures bare of all historical detailed content, rituals, claims of supernatural knowledge and belief in miracles, all that one is left with is purified religion. Purified religion only encapsulates pure ethical claims, and nothing else. These pure ethical claims are perfectly consistent with rational morality, and as such they are a guide to action which ought to be followed out of pure reverence. For Spinoza, it does not really matter if one is a good moral agent because one is following purified or natural religion, or whether one is following rational morality through philosophy (although, in an ideal world, it would be desirable that all moral agents act following rational morality and philosophy); corroborating this is Gregory (1989:37) when he says: *"What emerges in the Tractatus, as far as Spinoza is concerned, is the possibility of a worldly blessedness for both the rational person (through philosophy) and the common person (through purified religion...)."* This is very akin to Fichte's treatment of this topic, since Fichte understands that the divine law coincides with the moral law, and thus it does not really matter if one considers that one is acting because one is following the moral law or the divine law. Spinoza denies the possibility of any revelation, claiming rather that revelations are the fanciful outcome of the imagination of the prophets. In the ACAR Fichte does not deny the possibility of revelation outright, rather he says that revelation is a desirable possibility if it is possible at all. But he does deny that should a revelation ever occur that it requires to be sanctioned by institutionalised religion, the burden of sanctioning is rather with the individual. Fichte is not as radical as Spinoza insofar as the issue of revelation is concerned; and thus it appears that Fichte has softened Spinoza's position. The point here is that both Fichte and Spinoza seem to place

power with the individual and away from institutionalised religion. Fichte does this by giving the power of sanctioning a revelation, if it ever occurs, with the individual, rather than institutionalised religion; whilst Spinoza does this by denying the very foundation of institutionalised religion, revelation, as well as by advocating in favour or reasoning (and to a certain extent, of natural religion).

Spinoza treats superstitious or revealed religion with a great deal of suspicion. He understands that this form of religion is the source of fear, intolerant government and hatred among people, because of its claims to supernatural knowledge being the route to salvation, and specially its claim as the sole holder of the truth. In a historical context Spinoza has in mind the Roman Catholic Church, and the various Protestant denominations which, under those very claims I have just mentioned, vilified each other and fomented prejudice and hate among people. In the ACAR Fichte does not directly voice any concerns about revealed religion; I mean he does not directly criticise it, but he does voice his preference for natural religion. In a later work, however, namely The Way Towards the Blessed Life, Fichte seems to move closer to Spinoza by criticising 'religious fanaticism' and the consequences of it. Again, he does not mention revealed religion directly, but one cannot help associating the words 'religious fanaticism' in the following passage with 'revealed religion' - especially when he contrasts it with the true (or natural) religion. I quote Fichte (1949:32):

> All fanaticism, and all its angry exhibitions, from the beginning of the word down to the present day, have proceeded from the principle: 'if my opponent be right, then am I a miserable man'. Where this fanaticism can wield fire and sword, with

> fire and sword it assails its detested adversary; where these instruments are beyond its reach, it has still the tongue left...

And Fichte (1949:35-36):

> They (fanatics) violently appropriate and pervert the description of that from which danger may be feared, and they doubtless calculate quite securely that no one will be found to discover the change...for...the true religion (natural religion)...has never been known to persecute, to show intolerance, or to stir up civil commotion...

For both Spinoza and Fichte, fear, hatred and intolerance, as well as any institution, ideology or government based on these, are restraining and limiting forces on the powers of reason. As such, these emotions and feelings and any thing based on them are also restraining and limiting forces to knowledge and consequently on all human freedom.

On a related issue, I note that Yovel (1989:vol.II:12) in his chapter entitled "Spinoza and Kant" makes an interesting point that is transferable to my argument here and is also related to what I have said previously. It could be said that both Fichte and Spinoza understand that there are three ways to salvation, where salvation means a rational purification of the individual by which the individual achieves a higher level of consciousness or understanding of reality. For both philosophers the first way to salvation is achieved through the third kind of knowledge and philosophy for Spinoza and through the moral law and philosophy for Fichte; needless to say that according to them only the very few, if any, can achieve salvation this way. The second way to

salvation is achieved through natural or purified religion and this is a more common and secular way to salvation; although it is not reached through the same means as the first, it is still acceptable as it yields the same results, such as justice, respect and social help. The third way to salvation is achieved through revealed religion; Spinoza, as I said, is particularly hostile to this kind of religion as it foments hatred and intolerant governments; the earlier Fichte is not as radical as Spinoza, he tones down his understanding of revealed religion by giving the individual, rather than the institution, the final say on revelation, and consequently on salvation; the later Fichte, however, is much closer to Spinoza's position as he voices his concerns against religious fanaticism, and through this, he voices his disapproval of revealed religion.

I have thus demonstrated that both Fichte and Spinoza have similar views on theology and religion. That is, both philosophers understand that theology is a set of necessary truths that bear deep implications for morality, and that natural or purified religion is what re-connects human beings to the moral law, and that revealed or superstitious religion is to be approached with care because it often foments intolerance and fanaticism. And furthermore, both Fichte and Spinoza use this taxonomy to structure their respective philosophical systems.

UNDERSTANDING OF REVELATION

Another interesting issue concerns the subject of revelation. The term revelation usually covers any sort of intervention of God in reality. That is, God can intervene in reality through visions and dreams in subjects, or through a physical interference in the natural order of things which is presented or witnessed by subjects. In this section, I wish to focus on revelation as an intervention of God in the natural order of things, i.e. a miracle. Spinoza's treatment of this topic

in the Tractatus along with Hume's argument in his essay On Miracles are perhaps the best known works on this issue.[14] Fichte, however, has also written on this topic in the ACAR. Although he does not mention Spinoza by name in dealing with the issue of revelation, sometimes, it appears that in some particular passages of the ACAR , Fichte is giving a direct reply to Spinoza on his treatment of Revelation. The following seems to be one such passage, I quote Fichte (1978:118-120):

> Is this (revelation) even possible in general? Is it conceivable in general that something *outside* nature (God) would have a causality *within* nature?...Let us now apply these principles to that anticipated supernatural influence of God in the world of sense. God is to be thought of, in accordance with the postulates of reason, as that being who determines nature in conformity with the moral law. In him, therefore, is the union of both legislations, and that principle on which they mutually depend underlies his world view. For him, therefore, nothing is natural and nothing is supernatural, nothing is necessary and nothing contingent, nothing is possible and nothing is actual. Negatively we can assert this much for certain, obliged by the laws of our thought; but if we wanted to determine the modality of his understanding positively, we would become transcendent. So there can be no question at all concerning how *God* could conceive of a supernatural effect in the

[14] NB. I beg the reader to note that I shall not deal with Hume's understanding of miracles in detail here. I however find it necessary to provide the reader with a very brief characterisation of his views on miracles. Hume dismissed the occurrence of miracles on account that they relied on witnesses' accounts, and that these accounts are unreliable. Hume understood that the more likely explanation of such miraculous events is that they are merely natural events, which witnesses are unfamiliar with, e.g. a lunar eclipse. As such, such events are not God's intervention in the natural order of things.

> world of sense as possible and how he could actually do it; but rather how *we* are able to conceive of an appearance as effected by a supernatural causality of God.

Hence, Fichte understands that since God is the creator of, and guarantor of the congruency of the noumenal and phenomenal realms, it is not impossible to conceive of him interacting with the phenomenal realm in order to make his views known. This is so because in the ACAR Fichte understands God as a transcendent entity who wills the existence of the world (and its phenomenal and noumenal realms), and as such, he is not restrained in his actions in any way whatsoever, he formulates the rules and he bends these rules as he pleases. I understand this to be a possible reply to Spinoza. In the Tractatus Spinoza had asserted that a revelation could not happen. That is, Spinoza dismisses the possibility of revelation by arguing that such alleged events are nothing more than unfamiliar events to the subject reporting it (i.e. these events are natural events, i.e. events that fall under the laws of nature, rather than breaches of the natural laws, although being unknown by the subject reporting it as a revelation or miracle). Spinoza's views on this follow directly from his metaphysical system. As I mentioned above in this chapter, Spinoza's metaphysics advocates that i. only one substance exists, ii. this unique substance is God, and iii. God is Nature, the whole of Nature. Such views, imply that the whole of Nature is divine. Thus, Spinoza's metaphysics has no space for a transcendent entity, who wills the world, i.e. a transcendent God, as Fichte understands it; rather, Spinoza's metaphysics is a move towards pantheism since it divinises Nature, and this implies that God or Nature is immanent to all things in the world. Moreover, this implies that if Spinoza wants to be consistent he has to negate the possibility of revelations as miracles, since if a revelation or miracle were to occur this would imply that God or Nature is interfering with its own essence,

which is necessarily illogical, i.e. it is physically impossible for Nature to interfere with its own essence. According to Spinoza everything has an essence, 'everything is what it is', and it is impossible to contravene this essence, e.g. human beings' essence does not allow for physical flying. Thus it would be a breach of human beings' essence if one were able to physically fly - perhaps, this human being would not be a human being anymore, but a different sort of being. In the same manner, Nature has to follow its own essence, and it would be illogical if it were able to modify its essence, its natural laws. The following passage of Spinoza's Tractatus is worth quoting here. I quote Spinoza (1862:83):

> Nothing, then, comes to pass in nature in contravention to her universal laws, nay, everything agrees with them and follows from them, for whatsoever comes to pass, comes to pass by the will and eternal decree of God; that is, as we have just pointed out, whatever comes to pass, comes to pass according to laws and rules which involve eternal necessity and truth; nature, therefore, always observes laws and rules which involve eternal necessity and truth, although they may not all be known to us, and therefore she keeps a fixed and immutable order...[15]

This is the reason why Spinoza, unlike Fichte, cannot allow the possibility of revelations. At any rate it seems that Fichte is, in some particular passages of the ACAR, giving a possible reply to Spinoza on this issue since he clearly mentions the physical possibility of revelation, and Spinoza negates revelation exactly on the grounds that it is a physical impossibility. That is, for Spinoza it is a physical impossibility because it is logically impossible for nature to change or

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[15] Spinoza, Tractatus, p. 83.

interfere with its own essence, and for Fichte it is a physical possibility because a transcendent God, the creator, can change or bend the rules whenever he pleases. It is interesting to note, however, that one could infer that Fichte possibly became unhappy with his position in the ACAR because he abandoned the idea of a transcendent God altogether in his more mature writings, as I shall discuss in the next subsection.

THE CONCEPT OF GOD

In reading the canon on Fichte's writings one cannot help but notice that Fichte changed his conception of God during his academic life. In his early writings we find him holding that God is a transcendental entity; later, we find Fichte holding that God is an immanent entity; finally, in his last works, we find some evidence of Fichte giving up on the idea of God altogether, evidence which triggered the atheism controversy and Fichte's losing his chair at the University of Jena. In this section I aim at demonstrating Fichte's motivation for moving away from one idea of God to another. This demonstration will be done within the context of his philosophical development.

In the ACAR, his first book, we find Fichte holding to the idea of God as a transcendent entity, an entity much like the Judaeo-Christian God who wills the world. In the ACAR we also find Fichte defending two other theses, namely, the thesis that reason is autonomous, and the thesis that revelation is a desirable possibility that occurs when God intervenes in the natural world so that human beings who had lost their reverence for the moral law can be guided back to it. Copleston (1999:78), however, noted an interesting objection to Fichte's argument in the ACAR, as follows:

> Obviously, it can be objected against Fichte's position that to decide whether revelation really is revelation or not we have first to know the moral law. Hence revelation adds nothing except the idea of fulfilling the moral law as true expression of the all-holy will of God. True, this additional element constitutes what is peculiar to religion. But it seems to follow, on Fichte's premises, that religion is, as it were, a concession to human weakness. For it is precisely human weakness, which needs strengthening through the concept of obedience to the divine legislator. Hence if Fichte is not prepared to abandon the Kantian idea of the autonomy of reason and if at the same time he wishes to retain and support the idea of religion, he must revise his concept of God

The point here is that if reason is an autonomous faculty, why does it need reassuring? If reason is really autonomous, then surely it does not need revealed religion, because reason would always be able to reconnect itself to, or never stray away from the moral law. This is a problem for Fichte, since he wants to retain both the autonomy of reason and revealed religion. In the way his argument stands it seems that it supports the view that reason is not really autonomous. For if reason strays away from the moral law, it requires God's interfering with the creation and revealing his wishes, so that reason can reconnect itself to the moral law. Without this interference of God, reason would not be able to reconnect itself to the moral law. Thus, if he wishes to retain the autonomy of reason and at the same time retain also the idea of a revealed religion, then Fichte must revise his argument so that support for both premises are in place. The autonomy of reason is unquestionable for Fichte, and hence, he must find a way of retaining the

idea of revealed religion. This can only be done through a new conception of God. As I understand Fichte, this is one of the things that he does in his *Wissenschaftslehre* project and in his subsequent writings. My understanding here is corroborated by commentators such as Bowman (2002) in his paper "Fichte, Jacobi and the Atheism Controversy" and Talbot (1913) in his paper "Fichte's conception of God". Also, I understand that the reworking of the concept of God will lead Fichte closer to Spinoza's views as I shall demonstrate below.

In the ACAR Fichte's conception of God is akin to the traditional understanding of that concept. That is, in the ACAR, by God is meant a transcendent all powerful Being, the creator, who wills the existence of the world and who reveals himself in the world when he wishes to reveal his wishes to humankind. In the *Wissenschaftslehre* project Fichte seems to depart from this previously held view of God. That is, according to the classical reading of the project, the reading of commentators such as Schelling and Hegel, the concept of God appears to have been reformulated. It is worth re-stating this position here. According to this reading, there is an Absolute I, that somehow *continuously creates the whole of reality*, including Nature as a not-I and individual consciousnesses as relative "I"s. As I mentioned previously, according to this reading the Absolute I is to be equated with God because the Absolute I cannot be known but only taken on faith because the Absolute I is the source of all reality. The Absolute I is not, however, God as a *transcendent* entity, rather the Absolute I is a God who is *immanent* to all things. In short, the classical reading seems to defend the view that the Absolute I is an immanent God and that it is the source of all reality and that it cannot be known but only believed in faith or postulated.

Thus, in the classical reading of the project the concept of God has been reformulated. God is no more a transcendent entity who creates the world and who only interferes with it when

he desires to reveal his wishes to humankind; rather, according to the classical reading, in the project, God is an entity who must continuously create nature and individual consciousnesses. Such a reading of Fichte's philosophy brings him very close to Spinoza. As I mentioned in the subsection on the Absolute I above, Fichte's Absolute I becomes virtually identical to Spinoza's substance (or God or Nature). Both the Absolute I and the substance create the world continuously, are identified with the whole of reality, and are equated to God as an immanent entity. This immanent entity is the source of all creation.

Following from this, it could be said that Fichte is re-working the concept of God so that support for both of those theses, viz. the autonomy of reason and revealed religion, are in place. As I mentioned previously the concept of a transcendent God did not provide the right support for those theses. And since for Fichte giving up on the autonomy of reason is out of the question, he must find support for revealed religion, he must find a new conception of God that fits his views of revealed religion. Thus, the question here is: does the concept of God as an immanent entity provide the right kind of support for revealed religion? The answer to this question is: yes, it does. The idea of an immanent God does provide better support for Fichte's thesis of the necessity of revealed religion. This is so, because an immanent God does not need to interfere with the created world, as does a transcendent God. Rather, an immanent God is always creating reality, and as such he is always present within reality. An immanent God reveals himself in the whole of reality and thus there is no need for him to interfere with creation. Therefore, whilst the concept of a transcendent God appears to be a concession to human weakness since the transcendent God must interfere with creation by revealing his wishes to humankind so that humankind does not stray away from the moral law; the concept of an immanent God does not incur this problem since the immanent God is already revealed in

creation. The immanent God does not need to interfere with creation, he is already there and always present in creation. As such, humankind only needs to discover and understand the immanent God's will by looking around and understanding the world. The moral law is always already there in the world, and human beings, who have strayed away from it, need only to reconnect themselves to it. Given enough time, all human beings who strayed away from the moral law will reconnect themselves to it. Thus, the concept of an immanent God does not represent a concession to human weakness as does the concept of a transcendent God. This reading also ties well with the idea of a God who is the guarantor that human action can be successfully enacted in the world, since the Absolute I, now the immanent God, continuously creates nature and subjective consciousnesses, i.e. it is their source, and thus guaranteeing their congruency. I quote Bowie (2003:72):

> The difficulty always lies in how two sides can be connected if they are supposed to be of a different order from each other. If nature is merely objective and deterministic, then its relationship to subjectivity becomes problematic. Fichte's solution to this problem was the idea of an absolute I which includes both individual consciousnesses and nature within it, as relative I and not-I...

Fichte's move from a transcendent God and to an immanent God provides his philosophical system with a more solid base, and as such it represents a vast improvement in his search for a systematic and coherent system. Talbot (1913:57), however, notes that conceiving God as an immanent entity does not solve all of Fichte's problems, and that Fichte was aware of this fact. I quote:

> If you conceive of God as a substance, a being, a person, a consciousness, it is possible, he (Fichte) says, for you to raise the question: Is there any God such as I conceive?

Thus even if one conceives of God as an immanent entity rather than as a transcendent being, one can still raise the question: Is there such an entity which is the very source of all creation? Any answer to such a question has to be taken on faith as the existence of such an entity can never be proven a priori, because immanence is not part of the concept of God nor can it be proven a posteriori because one can never gather enough evidence for the existence of such an entity. A doubt will always remain. This is a problem for Fichte since many philosophers always demand to know the 'truth' definitively one way or another. Therefore, conceiving God as an immanent entity does not solve all of Fichte's problems, Fichte must try to find a new understanding of this concept. He must find a new conception that supports his theses of the autonomy of reason and revealed religion and that does not suffer the pitfalls suffered by these previous conceptions of God.

In his later works, namely, The Way to the Blessed Life and On the Basis of Our Belief in a Divine Providence, Fichte seems to give up on the idea of an immanent God. That is, Fichte, who had previously given up on the idea of a transcendent God in favour of the idea of an immanent God, now gives up on this idea also. It appears that Fichte gives up on the idea of an immanent God that is found in the classical reading of Schelling and Hegel of the *Wissenschaftslehre* project. He seems to give up on the idea of an Absolute I who, according to the classical reading, continuously creates nature as a not-I and relative "I"s (and which is

virtually identical to the classical reading that many of Spinoza's contemporaries had of Spinoza's substance - vide supra subsection on "Absolute I"). Furthermore, Fichte seems to give up on the idea of God as an entity altogether as he moves towards pantheism and atheism. This move towards pantheism and atheism brings Fichte very close to Spinoza and it seems to reflect a more accurate reading of Spinoza's philosophy, which is found in Jacobi's and Mendelssohn's writings, who were contemporaries of Fichte, and who wrote a great deal on Spinozism during the pantheism controversy.[16] This more accurate reading of Spinozism understands that Spinoza was both a pantheist and an atheist. That is to say, that this reading of Spinoza understands that the charge of pantheism leads to a charge of atheism also. Pantheism has as its central thesis the idea that everything is divine, everything is God, literally, the world is God. Such a thesis is completely removed from the common understanding of the concept of God. By this I mean that the pantheistic idea of God is quite different from the understanding that Christians, Muslims and Jews have of this concept. In their classical forms, these religious traditions hold the view that God is a transcendent entity. These traditions could even accept the idea that God is immanent to all things, that a spark of God is present in all entities of creation and that God is continuously creating everything, God has not withdrawn from creation, rather, God supports and maintains creation. These traditions, however, could never accept that the world is God, and that God is all

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[16] NB. Vide FH Jacobi, "Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Moses Mendelssohn", in The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill, translated and introduction by George Di Giovanni, Montreal & Kingston, London and Buffalo, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994, pp. 339-378. Jacobi's and Mendelssohn's interpretations (Jacobi's especially) are generally considered by commentators as being more accurate to the letter of Spinoza's philosophy. These interpretations are very detailed and do not rely on previous misconceptions and misinterpretations of Spinoza's philosophy. More importantly here is the fact that these interpretations did not rely on previous commentaries on Spinoza's philosophy, such as the highly inaccurate commentary of Pierre Bayle, which, until the break up of the Pantheism Controversy, was the most famous and well-known commentary on Spinoza, and which was part of the canon of most universities.

that there is. It follows from this, that these traditions understand that pantheism represents a form of atheism, since there is a negation of their understanding of God. Let us now look at those two later works of Fichte, since I understand that Fichte holds both atheistic and pantheistic views there, and these are very similar to the just described understanding of Spinoza as a pantheist and atheist.

In On the Basis of Our Belief in a Divine Providence, Fichte voices very pantheistic and atheistic views. Such views triggered the *Atheismusstreit*, the atheism controversy and resulted in the loss of his chair at Jena. There Fichte said:

> The world is, simply because it is; and it is what it is, simply because it is what it is. From this point of view we start with an absolute being, and this absolute being is the world, the two concepts are identical. [17]

Here he states that "the world is, simply because it is; and it is what it is, simply because it is what it is". This statement asserts that the world is *causa sui*, it has not been created, it exists of its own accord. Then Fichte identifies the world as being the absolute being, a characterisation which is usually ascribed to God. These assertions are clearly pantheistic in content and as such are also atheistic as they conflict with the common understanding that theists have of the concept of God.

In The Way to the Blessed Life, a text that encompasses a number of public lectures that Fichte gave on religion and which was written just after the On the Basis of Our Belief in a Divine Providence, whilst referring to God, Fichte (1949:4) says:

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[17] NB. Passage quoted by Copleston (1963:80).

> ...Being is throughout simple, not manifold; there are not many beings, but only One Being.

And Fichte (1949:5-6):

> This Being is simple, homogeneous, and immutable; there is in it neither beginning nor ending, no variation nor change of form, but it is always and for ever the same, unalterable, and continuing Being. The truth of this proposition may be briefly shown thus: Whatever is, in and through itself, that indeed *is*, and is *perfect* - once for all existing, without interruption, and without the possibility of addition.

Thus, in these two passages Fichte reasserts the view that there is only One Being (there are not many beings but only One Being), that this Being is infinite (there is in it neither beginning nor ending), has always existed (once for all existing, without interruption) and is *causa sui* and is perfect (whatever is, in and through itself, that indeed is and is perfect). This thesis is exactly the same as Spinoza's. In the Ethics Spinoza says:

> 1D6 - God I understand to be a being absolutely infinite, that is, a substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence.

And

> 1P17 corollary 2 - ...God alone is a free cause. For God alone exists from the mere necessity of his own nature and by the mere necessity of his nature he acts. And therefore he is the only free cause.

These passages of the Ethics, and there are others, demonstrate that Spinoza understood that the substance (and God is a substance), is a Being absolutely infinite, a Being who possesses an infinite number of attributes (and thus it is perfect), and a Being who is its own cause (and thus a Being who is absolutely free). Fichte's and Spinoza's descriptions of God are extremely similar, and hence, it could be said that in these later works, Fichte is echoing Spinoza's position. Fichte identifies his absolute being, his one Being, with the world; Spinoza identifies his unique and infinite substance as being the whole of reality. Both philosophers are defending pantheism by characterising the world in terminology which is usually used with reference to God and in doing so both philosophers are also defending atheistic views, since theists would not accept such a position.

The question here is thus: Does this new understanding of the concept of God as being the world or reality provide better support for the thesis that revealed religion is necessary? The answer to this question is: yes. By thinking of God as being the world, by thinking in such pantheistic terms, Fichte is able to provide better support to the thesis that revealed religion is necessary. If God is the world then God is always already there for us. There is no need for God to interfere with creation because God is always already revealed in creation. And thus, this avoids the problem of God having to interfere with creation, and this, as I noted at the beginning

of this subsection, conflicted with the thesis that reason is autonomous. Human beings, as autonomous and rational beings, are always connected to God/the world. And thus, even if human beings may stray away from the moral law because of the inherent evil that is present in human beings, human beings can always, potentially, reconnect themselves to the moral law. The moral law is always there revealed in reality, human beings have only to establish a connection with it. Given enough time, all human beings, who have strayed away from the moral law, will eventually all reconnect themselves to the moral law. Conceiving of God as the world has also an advantage over the idea of a transcendent God and of an immanent God. By conceiving of God as the world, Fichte also avoids the question: Is there such a God as I conceive? A question which posed a problem for the ideas of a transcendent God and of an immanent God. That is, by seeing the world as God, it is difficult for one to doubt the existence of God because the reality of God is always there, present, to one.

I have thus demonstrated that in Fichte's early academic life he conceived of God as a transcendent entity. Such a conception posed problems for his philosophical system. During his mature academic years Fichte moved to a conception of God as an immanent entity. This new understanding represented an improvement to his system, but it did not represent an ultimate solution to his problems as the idea of an immanent God could still be doubted. In his later academic years Fichte moved to a more pantheistic conception of God, a conception that leads to the charge of atheism and that does not incur the pitfalls of previous conceptions. There appears to be a sort of full circle in Fichte's philosophical development here as Fichte enthusiastically returns to his youthful Spinozism in search for answers and solutions to the philosophical problems he encounters.

CHAPTER 6: ETHICS

THE NATURE OF MORALITY AND ETHICAL VIEWS

In this section I will attempt to expound Fichte's answer to the following two questions: i. How is morality possible? and ii. What should I do? The answer to the first question is found in Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* project and the answer to the second question is found in Fichte's "Morality for Scholars" lectures. I shall deal with these questions in turn and demonstrate that Fichte's ethical views are very close to Spinoza's.

In the writings of the *Wissenschaftslehre* project Fichte deals mainly with the questions: How is experience possible? And how is knowledge possible at all? His answer to these questions is given in his doctrine of the Absolute I, and I have already dealt with the three interpretations of the Absolute I in a subsection above. This thesis, the thesis of the Absolute I, however, has some implications for morality, as I shall demonstrate below.

If one follows the classical reading of the project and its interpretation of the Absolute I as God, then the Absolute I, God, ensures that individual "I"s are able to experience and gain knowledge of reality. From this it follows that the Absolute I, God, also insures that individual "I"s are able to act upon reality, are able to impose their will upon reality. And this is how morality is possible, that is, morality is possible because God ensures, God guarantees that human beings can successfully act upon reality. This reading seems to follow on the shadow of Kant's first and second Critiques as it understands that God acts as the guarantor that human beings can successfully experience, and act upon, reality.

If one follows the strong idealist reading of the project and its interpretation that the Absolute I is the rationality and spontaneity of the mind, and accepts its criticism that Fichte's views end up in solipsism, then the possibility of morality becomes problematic. It becomes problematic because one could say if I am alone in the world, if all that I experience is the product of my own mind, then what need do I have for morality? Strictly speaking, I can claim possession of whatever I want, I can behave in whatever manner I see fit, there are no constraints to my behaviour, there are no reprisals to a bad action of mine. Therefore, one could say that morality would have no place if I am alone in world and if reality is the product of my own imagination. A possible reply to this is perhaps to advocate that morality does not require an interaction between human beings and between human beings and reality. According to this view a human being is a moral being whether or not he is interacting with other human beings, and with reality. For this, one would have to advocate that human beings possess some sort of moral sense, perhaps in the Humean lines, where a human being knows what is wrong because what is wrong disgusts him, and knows what is right because what is right pleases him. The problem with this reply is that it is difficult to prove, since human beings are always living within society, human beings are in constant interaction with other human beings, and human beings are always connected to reality. As such this view suffers from the fact that if my mind is creating all that I experience, then where is the content for such experiencing coming from? And following from this problem, one could ask: Didn't Kant and Fichte establish that we require a contact with reality, that we require this contact for content, if we are to have the experiences that we have, and if we are to become self-conscious of ourselves through differentiating ourselves from what is not-ourselves? It follows from what I have maintained here that the

strong idealist reading proves to be very problematic for morality, and it is perhaps inconsistent per se.

More interesting here, however, is the modern interpretation of the project, and as such I want to concentrate much of my efforts here dealing with that interpretation. The modern interpretation of the project understands that the Absolute I is the basis of all human experiencing and of the possibility of attaining knowledge, that is, this interpretation understands the Absolute I as being the sheer activity and spontaneity of the mind. It is this sheer activity and spontaneity of the mind that grounds all human experience and that enables one to gain knowledge. This Absolute I, this activity and spontaneity of the mind, gives rise to the individual and pure I, the self that will accompany all of the mind's representations - the self that will be able to lay claim to a representation, the self that will be able to say: *this is my representation.* But experiencing and knowledge require more than this. When the individual and pure I first arises it feels limitless, it feels infinite. This feeling of infinity is grounded in the Absolute I, the sheer activity and spontaneity of the mind, that has no limits per se, i.e. to set a limit for the activity and spontaneity of the mind would be arbitrary. The pure I, however, comes to understand that there are limits to its activity as it encounters the not-I, i.e. reality. At first the pure I is overwhelmed by the not-I to the extent that the pure I loses itself in the activity of the not-I. After being overwhelmed by the not-I the pure I continuously tries to re-establish itself and to strike a balance between its own activity and the not-I's activity. In this way, reality, the not-I poses a limit and a challenge to the infinitude of the pure I. The pure I is always checked (*Anstoss*) by the not-I. That is, reality limits the actions of the pure-I and reality also challenges the not-I to overcome this limitation. Reality acts as both a hindering force and as a motivation to the pure I. Fichte understands that there is a continuous struggle between the pure I and not-I

and this is how human beings achieve self-consciousness; this is how human beings experience and gain knowledge of reality; and this is how human beings act upon reality.

Fichte understands that this account of consciousness provides a solid basis for theoretical and practical reason. Let us look at theoretical reason first. At first the pure I posits a check (*Anstoss*) caused by the activity of the not-I every time it tries to think and act. Fichte understands that through reflection the pure I comes to develop this check into sensations (i.e. as impinging on me), intuitions (i.e. as being related to me), and concepts (i.e. as being grouped together by me) which are all united in its experiencing of reality, i.e. a spatio-temporal world governed by causal laws. This is how theoretical reason arises and works for Fichte. That is, theoretical reason is possible for Fichte because we can successfully experience and reflect upon the world. Practical reason arises within the same foundations. As the pure I is checked by the not-I the pure I tries to change the not-I, the pure I tries to impose its will upon reality. As the pure I tries to do this it perceives that the not-I encompasses things and entities. In other words: The pure I comes to recognise that there are physical objects in the world, it experience these objects, and it tries to control these same objects; and the pure I also comes to recognise that there are other pure "I"s in the world, pure "I"s who seem to demonstrate that they also experience the world and who demonstrate that they have a will as they try to change things in reality. Practical reason is possible for Fichte because we can successfully try to impose our will on reality. By demonstrating the possibility of practical reason Fichte also demonstrates the possibility of morality as it is a necessary requirement of morality that I can successfully enact my will in the world - if I cannot successfully enact my will in the world then I cannot be held responsible for any actions which may be ascribed to me. In fact, as Beiser (2002:232-233) notes the relation between theoretical and practical reason goes beyond their common

foundations. Practical reason takes precedent over theoretical reason, and this implies that I can infer that I experience reality *because* I can interact with reality, and this is in contrast to Kant who understood that theoretical reason is prior to practical reason. I quote Beiser (2002:232-233):

> Fichte's doctrine of the primacy of practical reason was crucial to his break with the subjectivist tradition...practical reason has primacy over theoretical reason because it explains the fundamental presupposition of theoretical reason: that there exists an external world. Fichte defined the primacy of practical reason in just this sense in the *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* when he wrote that the proof that reason is practical is that it could not be theoretical if it were not practical. He explained that the central assumption of theoretical reason - that there exists some object outside myself - is demonstrable only as the condition for the possibility of moral action, or of my striving to change and improve the world... this means that we can assume there is an external world - the fundamental presupposition of our experience - only as a condition for moral action. In other words, what justifies belief in the external world is that it is the medium and means for the execution of moral duty.

It is noteworthy here to re-state that I understand that Fichte tried to improve on the Kantian understanding of how morality is possible. Kant understood that morality is possible because human beings are rational and autonomous beings, beings that can rationally and autonomously choose or deliberate over an action. For Kant, the autonomy of reason implies freedom to

choose without external interference. If I am to be a moral agent I ought to be able to freely choose what action to take without any sort of interference from outside causes. I can only act autonomously when my actions are *completely self-imposed.* I can only act autonomously when my actions are initiated by reason and when these same actions are universalisable. According to Kant, if my actions are initiated by feelings, desires and emotions, then my actions are not autonomous as these types of actions have been initiated by outside forces, and as such non-autonomous actions are not desirable moral actions. Therefore, Kant advocates a picture of morality where willing and feeling are separated. Kant severs the connection between *what I will as a moral agent* and *what I feel as a human being.*[18] In Fichte this connection is re-established. Fichte provides us with an holistic understanding of human beings as moral agents. In Fichte we do not find the moral action as the outcome of a completely self-imposed legislation. The pure-I is in a constant intercourse with the not-I. The pure-I's willing and feeling are interconnected. The pure-I feels the not-I impinging on it (pure-I) and as such the pure-I tries to enact in the not-I so that the not-I conforms with its (pure-I's) willing. In Fichte we find that there is a constant interaction between the pure I and the not-I. The pure-I feels the action of the not-I and the pure-I tries to change the not-I so that the not-I conforms with the pure-I's will. Fichte is aware that this interaction will never be truly and well balanced.

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[18] NB. This is the classical interpretation of Kant's views. More recently, however, some commentators have put forward a more sympathetic interpretation of Kant. For instance, Barbara Herman (in her paper "On the Value of Acting from Motive of Duty", in *Philosophical Review*, 90, 1981) and Richard Henson (in his paper "What Kant might have said: Moral Worth and the Overdetermination of Dutiful Action", in *Philosophical Review*, 88, 1979) put forward the view that Kant did not break the connection between what the individual will and what the individual feel. They argue that Kant was only arguing that the primary motivator for a moral action ought to be self-imposed, that I ought to act on those duties, those maxims given to me by the categorical imperative; but does not mean that other motivators, such as emotions and inclinations, may not accompany or match the primary motivator. As I said this is a much more

Nevertheless, Fichte does understand that we should strive to bring this interaction to a harmonic balance. In the following passage of Fichte's "Morality for Scholars" lectures, Fichte puts his views quite explicitly. I quote Fichte (1993:149-150):

> The will is of course free within its own domain, that is, in the realm of objects to which, once man has become acquainted with them, it can be related...But feeling, as well as representation,...is not something free, but depends instead upon things external to the I...If the I nevertheless ought to be at one with itself...then it must strive to act directly upon those very things upon which human feeling and representation depend. Man must try to modify these things. He must attempt to bring them into harmony with the pure form of the I...And since this bent [the external action on the pure I] is derived from outside of us, it is impossible for it to be in harmony with the form of our pure I. [my brackets]

It is also worth quoting here the following passage from Lumsden (2004:136) whose work gives an insight into this aspect of Fichte's system:

> In the Kantian story, autonomy is only possible under the condition where I legislate myself to act in light of a norm that is authoritative because it is universalizable. I act autonomously when my action is completely self-imposed. If my action is initiated by feelings, desires, drives and so on then the action is characterised as heteronomy [limitation]. The role constraint plays in the

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sympathetic reading of Kant, but it is a modern reading, and as such it was never considered by

> Wissenschaftslehre, as the condition of action and freedom is very similar to Kant's account of autonomy, but Fichte's account of moral action could not be described as fully self-imposed rational legislation. In Fichte's case genuinely moral actions arise to a unity of feeling and willing...Even though Fichte argues that the unity of feeling and reason can't be achieved, we should aspire to achieve such harmony. [my brackets]

Spinoza had already answered the question over the possibility of morality along the same lines as being proposed by Fichte. For Spinoza, human beings are modes of the substance, modes which have access to the extension and mental attributes of the substance. As such, human beings are rational and physical beings. The possibility of morality is not only based on human beings' rationality, but also on human beings' feelings and emotions, which are a response to the interaction between human beings as modes with other modes (human beings or not). Human beings are always trying to modify the world around themselves so that the world complies with their will, and at the same time the world (which is composed of other human beings and other kinds of modes) is interfacing with human beings. This interfacing produces all sorts of feelings and emotions in human beings. There is no way of dissociating these two movements of willing and feeling. Human beings will always try to bend the world to their will, and the world will always impinge on human beings. Willing and feeling are interconnected. The human being is this whole of willing and feeling. Spinoza however understands that willing must try to conquer feeling, and this is done through understanding the world around us. If I understand the world around myself, then I will search for those things that are good for me, those things which will

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Kant's contemporaries.

help me endure for as long as I possibly can. And at the same time I will avoid those things that are not good for me, those things which will hinder my existence. Spinoza understands that everything seeks to endure for as long as it possibly can. As such Spinoza followed the Stoic dictum that everything seeks its survival, survival takes priority over everything; and as such Spinoza rejected the Epicurean tradition (and he would also reject its revival in Utilitarian philosophy) which held that everything seeks pleasure and avoids pain. All that said, let us sum up Spinoza's position on the possibility of morality. Morality is possible for Spinoza because human beings can successfully interact with, and impose their will upon, the world. And thus, Spinoza would reject Kant's idea that morality is to be based only on rationality. For Spinoza, such a claim is the negation of the naturalistic fact that human beings are willing and feeling entities.

Now that I have demonstrated how Fichte and Spinoza understand that morality is possible, that we are moral beings, I can demonstrate how Fichte answers the question: What should I do? The answer to this question, as previously mentioned, is found in his "Morality for Scholars" lectures, and I shall scrutinise some of these lectures in order to expound his ethical views. But before doing this, a few words regarding this work.

Fichte arrived in Jena in May 1784 just before the start of the summer semester. He had spent the previous months perfecting his new philosophical system, the *Wissenschaftslehre* project, and preparing his private lectures on this. Fichte, however, did not want to use his newly appointed position to solely teach his system to a handful of students - he wished to have a deeper influence on the whole of the university community. It is because of this wish that Fichte devised a series of public lectures, in addition to his private lectures, which were entitled "Morality for Scholars". His public lectures did not use the technical jargon of his systematic

philosophical system, as his private lectures did, and thus they were more accessible to the wider, learned community. Fichte's motivation for choosing this topic for his public lectures is clearly explained in the following passage of his Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre. I quote Fichte (1993:138):

> The sciences, as you all undoubtedly realize, were not invented as an idle mental occupation to meet the demand for a refined type of luxury. Were they no more than this, then the scholar would belong to that class to which all those belong who are living tools of a luxury which is nothing but luxury; indeed, he would be a contender for first place in this class. All our inquiries must aim at mankind's supreme goal, which is the improvement of the species to which we belong, and students of the sciences must, as it were, constitute that centre from which humanity in the highest sense of the word radiates. Every addition to the sciences adds to the duties of its servants. It thus becomes increasingly necessary to bear the following questions seriously in mind: What is the scholar's proper vocation? What is his place in the scheme of things? What relation do scholars have to each other and to other men in general, especially to the various classes of men? How and by what means can scholars most expeditiously fulfil the duties which they incur through these relationships? And how do they have to develop the skills which this requires? These are the questions which I shall be trying to answer in the series of public lectures which I have announced under the title "Morality for Scholars"

It is clear from this passage that the "Morality for Scholars" Lectures are concerned with ethical issues. Fichte wanted to demonstrate in these lectures that the vocation of man is self-improvement, that is to say that self-improvement is the *summum bonum* of humankind. Moreover, self-improvement is the ultimate goal of all human social intercourse, and the vocation of the scholar is to supervise, promote and guide humanity in this process of continuous self-improvement.

It is also noteworthy here that the word *Gelehrter* in the original title of the "Morality for Scholars" lectures (the original title reads *"Die Lehre von den Pflichten der Gelehrten"*), which is usually translated as Scholar needs some explaining, as Breazeale (1993:140-141) noted. By scholar it is not meant only in its narrow sense of an academic professional, a researcher or teacher, but also in its wider sense of someone who is educated, who spends his life pursuing knowledge and who is concerned with sharing any gained knowledge with the rest of humankind, since he understands that knowledge is the central pillar in humanity's continuous pursuit of self-improvement. On commenting on Fichte's understanding of *Gelehrter* Breazeale (1993:141) notes that: "thus it is the special responsibility of the scholar to supervise and to regulate human progress toward perfection, and in order to do this he must at least strive to be 'the ethically best man of his time'.

Let me now scrutinise some of these lectures and I will then tie Fichte's views with Spinoza's. In the first lecture Fichte aims to answer the question: 'What is the Vocation of Man as Such?'. Fichte understands that he needs to answer this question first, before dealing with the higher question: 'What is the Scholar's Vocation?'. The answer to this question is given by Fichte (1993:152) at the end of the lecture, where he establishes that:

> Man's final end is to subordinate to himself all that is irrational, to master it freely and according to his own laws. This is a final end which is completely unachievable and must always remain so - so long, that is, as man is to remain man and is not supposed to become God. It is part of the concept of man that his ultimate goal be unobtainable and that his path thereto be infinitely long. Thus it is not man's vocation to reach this goal. But he can and he should draw nearer to it, and his true vocation qua man, that is, insofar as he is rational but finite, a sensuous but free being, lies in endless approximation to his final goal. Now if, as we surely can, we call this total harmony with oneself "perfection", in the highest sense of the word, then perfection is man's highest and unattainable goal. His vocation, however, is to perfect himself without end. He exists in order to become constantly better in an ethical sense, in order to make all that surrounds him better sensuously and - insofar as we consider him in relation to society - ethically as well, and thereby to make himself ever happier.

Thus, human nature, or the vocation of man qua man, implies, according to Fichte, that human beings are in a constant pursuit of self-improvement, self-improvement towards perfection. Presumably Fichte understands that by perfecting oneself, by improving oneself, one becomes a better and well-rounded individual and as such one becomes a better moral agent. This pursuit involves understanding, and perhaps controlling the world around us. The pursuit of self-knowledge and of knowledge of the world around us is a virtuous thing for Fichte, since such knowledge enables one to improve oneself as well as the world as a whole. Moreover, Fichte understands that the path towards self-improvement is endless and eternal, and this is so, because

human beings are finite, although rational beings, that is to say, that Fichte understands that because human beings are finite, human beings can never achieve perfection, since perfection requires infinity, and only God is infinite and thus perfect. This later issue can be explained further as: Fichte understands that the predicate perfection is not part of the concept of human being, but it is part of the concept of God; if human beings were to become perfect human beings would cease to be human beings and would become Gods. Note here the contrast between Fichte and Kant on the issue of the summum bonum. Both, Kant and Fichte, postulate God, souls and immortality, but whilst Kant understands that happiness is the summum bonum, Fichte understands that self-improvement is the summum bonum, and this shift from happiness to self-improvement has implications for Fichte's system. Whilst Kant understands that human happiness is eventually achievable, Fichte understands that the path of self-improvement towards perfection can never be achieved because it is endless and infinite. Thus human beings can never achieve perfection, human beings can only get closer and closer to it through a process of improvement. A question could be raised here: If the summum bonum is unattainable, then where is the motivation to pursue it? Fichte could provide us with two answers here. Both answers are related to Fichte's philosophical development. The first possible answer considers Fichte as a theist or a deist within his own philosophical development. Support for this possible answer is found on the fact that the "Morality for Scholars" lectures were written around the same time as the *Wissenschaftslehre* project. And as I established in the subsection on the 'Concept of God' in the project Fichte held the view of God as an immanent entity. So it could be said that Fichte held this same view in the lectures. As such, if we read him as a theist or a deist, then Fichte would say that human beings have a role to play in creation. Their role in God's master plan is to develop themselves and try to achieve perfection. Human beings must

try to fulfil this role, since God has planned it. The second answer however takes a different form in Fichte's development. That is, if we read Fichte as already starting to move away from the theism or deism of his earlier philosophical development, and into the atheism and pantheism of his later philosophical development, then Fichte would say that human beings cannot help but to try to develop themselves and learn as much as they can about themselves and about the world around them. It is in human nature to do so, that is what human beings are. This second answer would be very agreeable to Spinoza, who would answer along the same lines as he aimed at providing a naturalistic account of everything, including human nature. I note that Hegel would take issue with Fichte's replies here by directly criticising the human situation in such a scenario. Harris (1977:17) describes Hegel's possible reply to Fichte here, when he says:

> The "infinite progress" in morality which Fichte accepted as the destiny of humanity, was for Hegel an endless treadmill of internalised slavery; it placed man in the situation of Sisyphus or Tantalus, it deprived him even of the rational possibility of a real self-fulfilment that could be known and enjoyed.

I understand that Hegel's criticism here demonstrates that he probably did not fully grasped Fichte's views. Fichte could provide two possible relies to Hegel, replies which are, again, connected to his philosophical development. In the first reply we take Fichte as a theist or deist. That is, if we read Fichte as a deist or a theist, then it would be reasonable to hold that he believed that God has a plan for humanity. God is benevolent, and as such, God would unsure that human beings would feel some sense of self-fulfilment and enjoyment in their lives. Fichte could even ask Hegel: What sort of benevolent God would take such a feeling from us? The

second possible reply is connected to reading Fichte as a pantheist and atheist. Fichte would say: If it is in human being's nature to pursue knowledge and better themselves endlessly, then would it not be very odd if they did not feel some sort of self-fulfilment? If one fulfils one's nature, then one must feel some sort of self-fulfilment. It would be paradoxical if one followed one's nature and at the same time did not enjoy it and did not achieve some sort of self-fulfilment. The important issue here is the process, not the final goal.

In the second lecture Fichte poses the question: What is the vocation of man within society? Thus, in this lecture, Fichte sets to put forward an account of human being's social nature, their drive towards society and the betterment of society. The following quote summarises Fichte's conclusion in this second lecture. I quote Fichte (1993:160):

> The true vocation of man within society is,...,unification, a unification which constantly gains in internal strength and expands its perimeter. But since the only things on which men are or can be in agreement is their ultimate vocation, this unification is possible only through the search for perfection. We could, therefore, just as well say that our social vocation consists in the process of communal perfection, that is, perfecting ourselves by freely making use of the effect which others have on us and perfecting others by acting in turn upon them as upon free beings.

In this lecture, Fichte sets out from the premise that human beings are rational and thus free beings - here one can see the influence of Kant, since Kant understood that it is a requirement

that moral beings must be rational and free.[19] His second premise in this lecture is that the 'I' of a human being contrasts itself with the 'not-I', i.e. the individual self needs to set its boundaries by perceiving what is outside itself. But by contrasting itself with the 'not-I', the 'I' perceives that there are some entities in the 'not-I' that do not act following the necessary laws of nature, but in a free manner. Therefore, human beings can assume that there are other human beings out there in the world; I quote Fichte (1993:156):

> One of man's fundamental drives is to be permitted to assume that rational beings like himself exist outside of him. He can assume this only on the condition that he enter into society (in the sense just specified, i.e. society is the relation where rational beings stand to each other) with these beings. Consequently, the social drive is one of man's fundamental drives. It is man's destiny to live in society; he ought to live in society. One who lives in isolation is not a complete human being. He contradicts his own self.

And thus, Fichte establishes that human beings are also social beings because they require the encounter with other rational and free beings, and hence it is only natural that human beings form societies, where society means an intercourse between rational beings. After establishing this, Fichte is able to conclude that human beings do not only aim at their personal constant self-

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[19] NB. Note here that Fichte's ethical views encompasses elements of virtue ethics (insofar as the pursuit of self-knowledge and knowledge of the world around one is a virtuous thing to do) , consequentialism (insofar as that one must aim at promoting the summum bonum, or self-improvement and the improvement of the world as a whole) and deontology (insofar as that it is a requirement that moral agents must be rational and free agents, and that Fichte also subscribes to the categorical imperative, as I demonstrated in the section on the ACAR, and which I will

improvement towards perfection, but that they also, as social beings, aim at the constant self-improvement towards perfection of their social spheres.

Now that Fichte has dealt with the issues of the vocation of man, and of the vocation of man within society, he is in a position to deal with his central topic in the fourth lecture, and thus, Fichte addresses the question: What is the scholar's vocation? His answer to this question is found in the following passage. I quote Fichte (1993:172):

> We have already shown that the purpose of all human knowledge is to see to the equal, continuous, and progressive development of human talents. It follows from this that the true vocation of the scholarly class is the supreme supervision of the actual progress of the human race in general and the unceasing promotion of this progress.

Thus, since the role of the scholarly class within society is to supervise, direct and promote the development of human beings' talents, the scholarly class has a pivotal stance within humankind's aim at continuous self-improvement towards perfection. It is the vocation of the scholar to foment and to facilitate human progress in the eternal and endless road to perfection. Moreover, every scholar must strive to promote and facilitate progress within his own class. Thus, according to Fichte, the scholar bears a heavy weight on his shoulders since he must promote and facilitate progress within his own class, as all other classes do, but he must also supervise, direct and promote progress in the other classes as well. I quote Fichte (1993:173-174):

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again mention below). I will come back to this point when I demonstrate Fichte's Spinozism in

> The scholar is especially destined for society. More than any other class, his class, insofar as he is a scholar, properly exists only through and for society...The scholar should now actually apply for the benefit of society that knowledge which he has acquired for society. He should awaken in men a feeling for their needs and should acquaint them with the means for satisfying these needs. This does not imply that all men have to be made acquainted with those profound inquiries which the scholar himself has to undertake in order to find something certain and true. For that would mean he would have to make all men scholars to the same extent that he himself is a scholar, and this is neither possible nor appropriate.

The last relevant lecture to this thesis is the eleventh lecture. In this lecture Fichte presupposes that the search for truth is a human drive, a pure drive, as he calls it. Other kinds of pure drive are the practical or ethical drive and the aesthetic drive. These pure drives are to be contrasted to the animal drives, or the animal sensuousness as Fichte calls these, e.g. sex and eating-drinking. Fichte gives animal drives a lower status to the pure drives, because the pleasure gained through the animal drives are self-destructive (and thus must be controlled), and the pleasure gained through the pure drives is cumulative. I quote Fichte (1993:224):

> the kind of pleasure which has its foundation solely in the gratification of animal sensuousness spoils and destroys itself through its very gratification and is not the

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these lectures, since I understand that Spinoza's ethical doctrines follow the same pattern.

> kind of pleasure that we are speaking here. Intellectual or spiritual pleasure such as,...aesthetic pleasure, increases as it is gratified.

Moreover, each pure drive is supposed to yield a particular imperative. Thus the practical or ethical drive yields the categorical imperative or Act in such a way that you always treat all human beings not as means but as ends in themselves; and the drive for truth yields the imperative. Fichte (1993:225) says: *"Judge so that you can consider the manner in which you are now judging to be an eternal law for all your judgements. Judge this particular case in a manner in which you could rationally wish to judge in every case."* Fichte considers the drive for truth a pivotal stance in the human's pursuit of self-improvement towards perfection, exactly because this drive pushes human beings in a search to truly understand themselves and the world around; and the more a human being knows about himself and the world around him, the more he can reconcile his sense of freedom with the necessary physical laws around him.[20]

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[20] NB. In the Science of Rights Fichte provide us with a very similar argument to the ones he presents in lectures 2 and 11. In the Science of Rights, however, he presents his argument in more detail, and it is worthy here to summarise his position there. There, his argument is presented in three stages and each stage is argued to a finer detail. In the first stage he argues that rights are a necessary condition of self-consciousness because a rational entity cannot posit itself without at the same time positing itself as an individual or as one of other rational beings. In the second stage he establishes that when I posit myself as rational I also posit myself as a free entity and in the same act I also infer other free beings. Freedom is something that is shared by all of us, all rational and free entities. The consequence of this is that the conception of rights is a necessary relation between free beings. The third and final stage of his argument in the Science of Rights is that originally the conception of freedom encompassed only a power, only rational spontaneity, and it is only this power that rational entities ascribed to each other. But freedom requires more than that; it requires that an outcome of the thinking activity be perceived in the external world, i.e. freedom requires that one's will be effective in the world. If all rational entities are at work in the same world, and thus interfering, checking, and opposing each other, then the latter conception of freedom is only possible if rational beings restrict their causality in the world by setting up some limits to their causality, and as such divide the world amongst them. This limitation must not be imposed on rational beings, to do so would be to cancel their freedom, and not to limit it. Rather, all rational beings must freely posit this

Let me sum up Fichte's argument here. Fichte understands that:

i. human beings aim at perfecting themselves;

ii. human beings aim at perfecting their societies;

iii. that the scholar should act as a guide to human beings and society as a whole;

iv. the human drive to search for truth pushes human beings towards self-improvement and perfection.

Let me now tie Fichte's views with Spinoza's. Spinoza's ethical views have been, by and large, neglected by his commentators in the Anglo-American tradition, who tend to focus on his metaphysics; and these views have also been neglected by commentators in the Continental tradition who have focused their efforts in studying Spinoza's socio-political doctrines.

Spinoza's ethical views have their foundations in his metaphysical system, which are found in parts 1 to 3 of the Ethics. The central element in this metaphysical system is its monism, that is, the theory that only one substance exists and that God or Nature (*Deus sive Natura*) is a substance. Spinoza argues that everything is part of the substance, i.e. the substance is the totality of all forms of Being as well as being the highest form of Being. Nature, for Spinoza, fits this conception of substance. And since the substance, now Nature, is the very cornerstone of his philosophical system, he understands that he must provide a naturalistic account of and a foundation for all his philosophical views, from ethics to human psychology.

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limitation, they must make it as a rule not to disturb the freedom of those other entities with whom they share a reciprocal relation. Note here that this last point implies that rational beings should respect the freedom and rationality of other rational beings - which lead us to the categorical imperative. For the purposes of this thesis, Fichte's argument in the "Lectures" will suffice. cf. JG Fichte, The Science of Rights, trans. AE Kroeger, London: Trubner & Co., 1889.

That is to say, for Spinoza everything has a naturalistic foundation. That said, let us now look at Spinoza's ethical views in some detail. Garrett (1997:267-314) describes Spinoza's ethical views as being a composite of virtue ethics, consequentialism and, to a small extent, deontology - and that much of his views on this topic are to be found in parts 4 and 5 of the Ethics, and I have already mentioned previously that Fichte's views follow this same pattern. Let me now elaborate these claims by demonstrating each of those elements which form Spinoza's and Fichte's ethical doctrines. I shall first look at the virtue ethics element of Spinoza's theory. Spinoza defines virtue as:

> 4D8 - By VIRTUE (virtus) and POWER (potentia) I understand the same thing, that is, virtue, in so far as it has reference to man, is his essence or nature in so far as he has the power of effecting something which can only be understood by the laws of that nature.

Prima facie, this seems to be a rather peculiar definition of virtue, since virtues have, and continue to be, commonly defined as character traits, which are good or useful for an agent to have. At a closer inspection, however, one can see that Spinoza's definition is a naturalistic development of the common understanding of virtues. Spinoza does not talk about character traits, such as the Aristotelian's honesty and courage. To do so, would imply some sort of humanism, that is, it would imply a definition of virtue from a human being's perspective of what is good or useful in one way or another to human beings or to human communities. Spinoza defines virtue as a power. Such an understanding of virtue is now archaic and out of use, as it was replaced by the understanding that virtue is a character trait. In this archaic sense a virtue is

a power that things have to affect other things, e.g. water has the virtue of dissolving salts or water has the power to dissolve salts. By defining virtue as a power, Spinoza is able to give a 'bird's eye' perspective on the matter. That is, Spinoza is providing a definition from Nature's perspective (i.e. from the substance's perspective). Thus, insofar as human beings are concerned, from Nature's perspective, virtue is a power that human beings possess to bring about certain things that conform with the very nature or essence of human beings, e.g. it is part of the essence of human beings that human beings are rational beings, so to make a rational decision is a virtue, it is a power that human beings possess.

Spinoza's understanding that virtue is a power is directly connected to his thesis of *conatus*. Spinoza defines conatus as:

> 3P7 - The endeavour (conatus) wherewith a thing endeavours to persist in its being is nothing else than the actual essence of that thing.

Spinoza is asserting here is that the very essence of everything, the identity of everything, is dependent on its self-preservation. Everything aims to endure for as long as it possibly can, and will strive towards this self-preservation goal - self-preservation is the summum bonum for Spinoza. Moreover, Spinoza understands that everything aims to increase its power of self-preservation in order to be able to face other things in the world and make the achievement of its goal easier, i.e. to endure for as long as it can. Now, let us link these two afore-mentioned quotes together. 1D8 says that virtue is a power to bring about certain things according to human beings' essence and 3P7 says that everything aims to endure for as long as it can, it is part of a

thing's essence to strive for self-preservation. It follows from these that virtue is a power to strive in self-preservation. The following passage corroborates this:

> 4P20 - The more each one seeks what is useful to him, that is, the more he endeavours and can preserve his being, the more he is endowed with virtue; and, on the contrary, the more one neglects to preserve what is useful, or his being, he is thus far impotent or powerless.

The question here is thus how does one increase one's powers and increases one's chances of endeavouring for as long as one possibly could? The answer to this question lies in the following passages:

> 4P24 - To act absolutely according to virtue is nothing else in us than to act under the guidance of reason, to live so, and to preserve one's being (these three have the same meaning) on the basis of seeking what is useful to oneself.

> 4P28 - The greatest good of the mind is the knowledge of God (*or Nature*), and the greatest virtue of the mind is to know God (*or Nature*). [my brackets]

Thus for Spinoza 'to act virtuously' and 'to act following reason' are one and the same thing. When one acts virtuously one is acting by the guide of one's reason; and it is by acting in such a manner that one can increase one's chances of enduring for as long as one possibly can. Moreover, 4P28 also demonstrates that Spinoza understands that knowledge is the origin of the

summum bonum, i.e. self-preservation. I mean, Spinoza holds the view that self-knowledge and knowledge of the world around us increase one's chances, one's power, of self-preservation. This claim makes a lot of sense if one understands that the more one knows about one's powers, strengths, weaknesses, limits, as well as about the environment in which one lives, the more one increases one's chances of self-preservation. Such a claim is difficult to dispute if one takes the naturalistic approach taken by Spinoza. Noteworthy here is that knowledge here needs some qualifying. That is, Spinoza does not mean just any knowledge, as some knowledge may be unfounded or based on inadequate ideas, i.e. the kind of knowledge given to us through sense-perception, and as such, this kind of knowledge does not provide the individual with Spinoza's conception of necessary freedom. I quote Scruton (1998:39-40) who describes this well:

> The one who lives by the dictates of reason is the 'free man' - the person who is active rather than passive in all that involves him. The illusory idea of free will stems from inadequate and confused perceptions; rightly understood, however, freedom is not the release from necessity but the *consciousness* of necessity that comes when we see the world *sub specie aeternitatis* and ourselves as bound by its immutable laws.

Spinoza prioritises that kind of knowledge that is attained through reasoning, i.e. the second and third kind of knowledge or *reason* and *intuition* (vide supra p. 110), and he does consider these kinds of knowledge as instrumental in the pursuit of self-preservation. These kinds of knowledge are solely formed by adequate ideas, and thus, they can guarantee their truth and enable one to comprehend oneself and the world around oneself. Also noteworthy here is that

the third kind of knowledge in particular is held to be supreme by Spinoza, as it provides a clear and direct relation of the parts to the whole, between the individual and the rest of the world; this kind of knowledge, Spinoza understands, is attained only by the few who philosophise correctly because, as Yovel (1989:vol.I:168) notes:

> It is the third kind of knowledge, a rational-intuitive procedure bound by no historical cult, revelation, election, covenant, and the like, that philosophers are eventually supposed to attain what the great mystics and religious aspirants have always been seeking and inevitably failed to find, because they relied on superstitious beliefs and practices. As in their conception of God, they were aiming at something true and real but missing the actual reference of their concepts.

Here one can see that Spinoza favours attaining knowledge through philosophy as a philosophical enquiry is directly connected with the third kind of knowledge. By holding such a view, Spinoza places philosophers in a privileged position, since only philosophers have a proper and correct understanding of the answers to those questions which greatly trouble humankind.

At this point, one can see that Fichte's and Spinoza's views are very akin. Both philosophers maintain that there is a summum bonum (i.e. a summum bonum which is self-preservation that is achieved through knowledge in the case of Spinoza and self-perfection which is attained through knowledge in the case of Fichte), and that the virtuous agent is the agent who follows his reason in attaining self-knowledge and knowledge of the world in his pursuit of the summum bonum, i.e. wisdom could be said to be the chief virtue. What Spinoza and Fichte are

asking us to do is: *know thyself and know the world around you.* Know your nature and know Nature as a whole. This view emanates from the old Stoic tradition. This tradition understands that one must know oneself and the world around oneself well, that one must reflect on one's own nature, that one must reflect on one's place in the world, and that one must reflect on the very nature of the world, and that such knowledge provides the agent with an effective guide to proper acting. I understand that this aspect of Spinoza's and Fichte's falls within the Stoic tradition, and as such it could be said that they are providing us with a philosophy for life, a practical philosophy for living, which has its foundations in knowledge and contemplation, but which also provides the agent with an effective guidance for proper acting. Schofield (2003:244-245) in writing about Stoic ethics notes an interesting point that is related to what I have just commented on and which is transferable to Spinoza's and Fichte's position. I quote:

> ...it will not do simply to refer to human nature, or at any rate to human nature understood in too limited a fashion. For although ordinarily the appropriate thing will be to look after one's health and one's possessions and so, in some circumstances it will not be. If the alternative to military service with a tyrant in an unjust cause is self-mutilation, or if the alternative to letting the boat capsize is throwing the cargo overboard, in these cases reason will enjoin self-mutilation and the jettisoning of one's possessions as the appropriate behaviour. What prompts these actions is not natural human impulse at all but experience of the course of natural events; that is, of nature at large, as we might say. In these cases, reasonable people act contrary to natural impulse on the experiential knowledge that waterlogged vessels overburdened with cargo usually capsize, and

> that persons with mutilated limbs are mostly unfit for military service...On this view it is not merely that we have to respond to the way things happen in nature at large if we are to act rationally and do the right thing. Stoicism offers a deep explanation for why this should be so; we achieve our true identity only when we function as parts of a whole - that is, of the providentially ordered universe...we are programmed to live consistently with the nature of the universe, not just human nature.

Thus, following from Schofield's comments on Stoic ethics, it becomes quite clear that both Spinoza and Fichte fall within this philosophical tradition, since both philosophers advocate that we should know ourselves and the world around us. That is, we should know our nature or essence, we should also know the place that this nature or essence has in the order of things or within the whole of reality, and we should know the nature of reality itself. Such knowledge provides us with a guiding hand for acting because such knowledge enables us to act and to accept the constraints of our own nature within the natural order of things. Such knowledge enables us to pursue the summum bonum more effectively because our efforts will not go to waste in misconceived and misadvised challenges, efforts and ventures. For instance, just to take a previously used example, if I know that it is not part of the human nature the capacity for physical flight, then I shall not pursue such a venture. I can however study birds and insects that possess this capacity in an attempt to understand their nature, and in doing so I can envisage ways of mimicking their nature, in doing so I can design devices that would enable me to fly. More interesting here is the fact that the Stoics, Spinoza and Fichte, appear to be advocating that we should act within the constraints of our own nature, within the constraints of the place that

our own nature has within the natural order of things, and within the constraints of reality. They do not appear to be advocating that we should effectively try to change these constraints. Rather, they appear to be advocating for a more holistic and harmonious standing as they seem to be advocating for an understanding of our nature, of our nature's place within reality and of the nature of the world and that we should act the best we possibly can within those necessary constraints which are imposed on us by our nature, by the place of our nature within the natural order of things and by the nature of the world.

There are however further similarities between Stoicism and Spinoza's and Fichte's ethical views. On commenting on Spinoza's ethical views James (1995:300) has noted an interesting point regarding a particular Stoic aspect of Spinoza's ethics. She argues that Spinoza shares with the Stoics the view that there is a difference between the virtuous agent and the morally experienced agent. I understand that James' point is transferable to Fichte's position. I quote from her paper "Spinoza the Stoic":

> It is, I think, clear that Spinoza shares with his Stoic forerunners the fundamental belief that a distinction must be made between virtue and what one might call 'moral conscientiousness'. A morally conscientious man will pursue such ends as friendship and security because he knows from experience and education that these are likely to yield and increase in Laeiticia. Spinoza would regard such a man as having made a good deal of moral progress, and in this his attitude is the same as that of stoics towards someone who fulfils their proper function. But Spinoza nevertheless insists that the morally conscientious man has not attained

virtue, because he has not realised that in order to lead a moral life one must pursue only what is good in itself - understanding

The virtuous agent for Spinoza, is the agent that *naturally* pursues knowledge so that he can achieve self-preservation. The agent that pursues knowledge because *experience* has taught him that knowledge will be helpful in his pursuit of self-preservation is an agent who has achieved some moral progress. This is an agent that, by and large, is on the right path. But, this is not an agent that ought to be equated with the virtuous agent. There is a distinction between the virtuous agent and the experienced agent. The former acts because he understands, because he has reflected on it; the latter acts merely through experience.[21] Fichte's position is very similar. Fichte understands that the virtuous agent will pursue knowledge whilst trying to perfect himself. But Fichte would also draw a distinction between the virtuous agent and those agents who pursue knowledge because experience has taught them that knowledge is overall useful in life. For Fichte the virtuous agent understands that attaining knowledge is the way to self-perfecting oneself and one's society. The experienced agent, for Fichte, realises that knowledge is useful, but he does not understand the greater picture. Therefore, both philosophers hold that there is a distinction between the virtuous and the experienced agent. Since Fichte shares much the same views as Spinoza here, it could be said that Fichte also falls in that Stoic philosophical tradition because he distinguishes the virtuous agents from the experienced agent.

Let us now go back to Spinoza's ethical views. Thus far it would appear to the reader that Spinoza is putting forward some sort of Ethical Egoism theory. That is, since the agent aims at

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[21] NB. John McDowell has recently put forward a very similar sort of proposition by arguing that in the case of the virtuous agent there is no inner strunggle. cf. John McDowell, "Virtue and Reason", in Virtue Ethics, Crisp, R., and Slote, M., Oxford: Claredon Press, 1996, pp. 141-162.

extending his existence for as long as he possibly could through the use of knowledge, and he does everything taking into account only the possible *good consequences* to himself, and disregarding any possible consequences to other agents, then Spinoza's agent is an ethical egoist. In such a view, an agent would tally the good and bad consequences and then take the action which would increase the good consequences over the bad ones to himself. It seems that Spinoza holds this view since he says that everything, every individual, wants to preserve itself for as long as it can and it will do anything to continue to exist. Thus, here one sees another feature of Spinoza's ethical views, namely, consequentialism, i.e. the good has to be maximised. Two questions arise here. First: how does Spinoza reconcile the virtue ethics element with the consequentialist element of his Philosophy? The answer to this question rests on Spinoza's understanding of virtues. Virtue or power or knowledge is just instrumental for Spinoza, that is, virtue is the means by which one achieves self-preservation, it is the means by which one maximises the good. This understanding of virtue as being instrumental is very similar to Fichte's understanding, since Fichte understands that knowledge is what enables one's pursuit of perfection. That is, wisdom as a virtue is the very enabling force that maximises the summum bonum, it is the instrument through which the summum bonum is reached.[22] The second question is directly related to Spinoza's ethical egoism thesis. How can we reconcile Spinoza's

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[22] NB Jonathan Barnes (1976:19-26) suggests that virtue ethics, as Aristotle presents it in the Nichomachean Ethics may be a meta-ethical theory, i.e a theory of what is important in ethics, rather than an ethical theory, i.e. a theory which aims at guiding action. It is my understanding that Spinoza and Fichte may have viewed "virtue ethics" in such a way. That is, virtue ethics as an agent centred theory, a theory in which one is always concerned in judging the agent's character, may provide the basic element, the foundations in which an ethical theory may be built upon. Thus, for Spinoza and Fichte, the good agent is the agent who pursues knowledge, the good agent is the agent whose character craves self-knowledge and knowledge of the world. Then the good agent must apply this knowledge in moral action. Jonathan Barnes, "Introduction", in Aristotle, Ethics, trans. JAK Thompson, London: Penguin Books, 1976, pp. 19-26.

ethical egoism with Fichte's approach where the individual has an important and central role in helping his community to develop and perfect itself? The divergence between Fichte and Spinoza regarding this point is merely apparent, as I shall demonstrate below. The following passage is crucial in clarifying Spinoza's views here:

> 4P37 - The good which each one who follows virtue (*reason*) desires for himself, he also desires for other men, and the more so the more knowledge he has of God (*Nature*). [my brackets]

Thus, prima facie, Spinoza is an ethical egoist, as I mentioned above. However, when one looks into the details of his philosophical system one finds a more complex scenario. That is, human beings are primarily egoists since each individual human being wants to preserve his own life for as long as he possibly could (and to do so he must consider the consequences of every action to himself). But in doing so, human beings realise that all other human beings are pursuing the same goal and in the same manner. This very fact demonstrates that the best thing for a human being to do is to team up with other human beings. To do otherwise would result in wars, violence and disputes, which would threaten, and not-enhance, one's existence. It would be counter productive to act in a *negative* manner. By working as a group, human beings are able to help each other to endure for as long as they possibly could; by taking a *positive* approach one enhances one's chances of continuing to exist. Therefore, Spinoza's individualism leads him to a communitarianism. The following passages of Spinoza corroborate my views:

> 4P31 - In so far as anything agrees with our nature, thus far it is necessarily good.

4P35 - In so far as men live under the guidance of reason, thus far only they always necessarily agree in nature.

4P36 - The greatest good of those who follow virtue (*reason*) is common to all, and all can equally enjoy it. [my brackets]

4P37 - The good which each one who follows virtue (*reason*) desires for himself, he also desires for other men, and the more so the more knowledge he has of God (*Nature*). [my brackets]

These four propositions are concerned with the relations between human beings and the conditions for a mutually beneficial and sustained intercourse in community life. Garrett (1997:277) explains these passages well when he says:

> Spinoza holds, as a general metaphysical thesis, that whenever two things "agree in nature" they will, to that extent, be mutually beneficial, since the nature that each strives to benefit is the same (E4P31). Human beings necessarily "agree in nature" to the extent that they are guided by reason (E4P35). For human reason, as reason, is the same in all, and it aims at the same thing - namely, knowledge or understanding. Understanding, moreover, is a good that can be shared by all without diminishing anyone's enjoyment of it (E4P36). In fact, Spinoza holds, nothing is more useful to a human being than another human being who is guided

> by reason (E4P35c1). Hence, individuals who are virtuous, or guided by reason, will all seek, from their own self-interest, the same goods for others that they seek for themselves (E4P37). Indeed to the extent that a community of human beings is guided by reason, its members can "compose, as it were, one Mind and one Body" (E4P18s) - that is, a complex individual, composed of like-minded human beings, that has its own endeavour of self-preservation.

Thus, according to Spinoza, it is in a human being's interest to associate himself with other human beings, since they are all pursuing the same goal, that is, they are all pursuing self-knowledge and knowledge of the world around themselves in their attempt to live for as long as they possibly can - here one can see Spinoza's communitarianism, i.e. it is in the human beings' interest to live in a community, and egalitarianism, i.e. all human beings are equal insofar as they are guided by reason, insofar as they have the same nature. Fichte's position is very similar. As I mentioned previously, Fichte understands that each human being is on an endless pursuit of self-improvement and towards perfection. Such a fact requires that human beings live in society, because it is only within society that knowledge can be stored, shared, analysed and improved. Therefore, the individualist premise of Fichte's system also leads his system to a communitarian outlook, since he understands that human beings are naturally social beings, i.e. it is only within society that human beings can pursue the summum bonum. Fichte is also an egalitarian, since he also understands that all human beings insofar as they are rational beings are equal to each other.

At the beginning of this section I asserted that Spinoza's and Fichte ethical views encompassed elements of virtue ethics, consequentialism, and to a lesser extend, deontology. Thus far, I have dealt with the virtue ethics and consequentialist elements of their theories. It is

appropriate for me now to deal with the deontological aspect of their theories. It is my understanding that there is also a small deontological element in these philosopher's theories as both Fichte and Spinoza hold that some actions are right or wrong per se. In the case of Fichte this element manifests itself as the categorical imperative, as I noted above, in my account of the last lecture of the "Morality for Scholars" lectures. Thus, for Fichte reason (through the use of the principle of universability of actions and through the principle of treating human beings as ends in themselves) will determine which actions are right and which are wrong, and thus, which actions must be performed and which must not. In the case of Spinoza this is not as clear-cut as in the case of Fichte, since Spinoza does not make "use of such concepts as 'duty', 'obligation', and 'right'". However "his description of reason as providing 'counsels', 'rules', 'precepts' and 'dictates' may be seen as also aligning him to some extent with the deontological approach to ethics", as noted by Garrett (1997:313). The following passage from the Ethics corroborates this:

> In these few propositions (4P10-18) I have explained the causes of human impotence and inconstancy, and why men do not follow the precepts of reason. It remains...that I should show what is that which reason prescribes for us...firstly, that the basis of virtue is to preserve one's being...secondly, that virtue should be desired by us on its own account, and that there is nothing more excellent or *useful* to us...thirdly, that those who commit suicide are powerless souls, and allow themselves to be conquered by external causes repugnant to their nature. (4P18 note) [my brackets and emphasis]

This passage shows Spinoza demonstrating that under the guidance of reason one could only attempt to pursue knowledge because knowledge is the origin of self-preservation as well as being instrumental in self-preservation. Reason prescribes, or provides the guidance, to achieve self-preservation. By referring to the case of suicide, Spinoza, provides us with an example of a case in which human beings fail to act rationally, a case in which human beings fail to act in accord with their own rational nature. To commit suicide is to fall prey to external forces. External forces which undermine one's nature. According to Spinoza, only one who fails to pursue knowledge of oneself and of the world around oneself, only one who fails to understand one's own nature, one's own situation in the world, and the world itself can fall prey to these external forces. Being a rational being, acting rationally, and following the guidance and precepts that reason gives us, is what enables us, human beings, to attain knowledge in our pursuit of self-preservation, and achieve it.

Therefore, Spinoza's and Fichte's ethical theories can be said to encompass elements of virtue ethics, consequentialism and deontology. Virtue is important for both philosophers, virtue is instrumental for both philosophers, virtue is what enables the agent to maximise the summum bonum, and reason provides guidance for which actions are right and which are wrong. Both philosophers also understand that the individual must exist within a community if he is to achieve some sort of fulfilment. The individual is not prior to the community, and the community is not prior to the individual. Individual and community are interdependent. Also interesting regarding the ethical views of both philosophers is the fact that they both fall within many aspects of the Stoic tradition, as I have demonstrated above.

CONCLUSION

In this part of my thesis I set out to investigate Fichte's Spinozism. I proposed to do three things. I proposed to investigate the importance of Fichte's Spinozism for a proper understanding of his philosophical system. I also proposed to demonstrate that Fichte searched in Spinoza for answers whilst trying to resolve the problems of the Kantian system. Finally, I proposed to demonstrate the similarities between Fichte's and Spinoza's philosophical systems.

In the various subsections of this chapter I have demonstrated that Fichte's and Spinoza's philosophical systems are very similar. Their ethical views, their standing over the issue of determinism, their understanding that knowledge leads to freedom, their treatment of religion and theology, all these issues demonstrate the similarity between Fichte's and Spinoza's philosophy.

I have also demonstrated that Fichte searched in Spinoza for answers to the problems of the Critical Philosophy of Kant. Fichte's Absolute I as the foundation of Fichte's system is an instance of this. Fichte's Absolute I could be equated with Spinoza's substance at least insofar as this concept is a first principle. That is, the Absolute I is the foundational principle of Fichte's system, it is the very concept that unifies it, and as such, it attempts to solve the lack of unification of Kant's philosophical system, which was plagued by dichotomies. Another instance that could be mentioned here regarding Fichte's trying to solve the problems of the Kantian philosophy concerns Fichte's views on the human being. Kant had split human beings in two halves. One half wills, the other half feels. Fichte merged these two halves back together in much the same way as Spinoza had done previously.

Finally, at various points in this chapter I had touched upon the issue of the importance of Fichte's Spinozism for a proper understanding of his philosophical system. By having a more holistic approach to Fichte's philosophy, by understanding the age when Fichte was writing and the problems faced by academia at the time, by understanding what Fichte was trying to do and answer, by understanding where he searched for answers, the reader can achieve a better understanding of his philosophical views. This is an extremely important issue, and it is often forgotten in the study of the History of Philosophy within the Anglo-American tradition, where particular philosophical systems are not unusually taught as independent of, or with very few references to, its historical context. I have now finished my investigation on Fichte and I shall now move on and enquire into Schelling's Spinozism.

PART III

SCHELLING AND SPINOZA

SCHELLING

In this chapter I shall investigate Schelling's Spinozism. Various commentators such as Bowie (1993, 2003), Copleston (1963), Esposito (1977), White (1983), Lawrence (2003), Hegel (1995), and Beiser (2002) have acknowledged the fact that Schelling was influenced by Spinoza's philosophical views. It is worth mentioning here that just as it had previously occurred with Fichte's Spinozism, Schelling's Spinozism has been acknowledged but not researched in detail. Commentators on Schelling acknowledge that he was influenced by Spinoza's views, but they neither investigate the extent of this influence in detail nor do they give much weight to the implications of Spinoza's influence on Schelling for a proper understanding of Schelling's philosophy. Thus, in this chapter I propose to do three things. Firstly, I propose to investigate the importance of Schelling's Spinozism for a proper understanding of his philosophy. Secondly, I shall demonstrate Schelling's aims in devising his philosophical system. That is, I shall demonstrate that Schelling became dissatisfied with Fichte's attempt to solve the problems of the Critical Philosophy of Kant, and that he searched in Spinoza for answers to those problems, just as Fichte had done previously. And lastly, I shall demonstrate the various similarities between Schelling's and Spinoza's philosophical views.

SCHELLING, KANT, FICHTE, AND SPINOZA

The first point to be established in this chapter concerns my claim that Schelling subscribed to certain aspects of Spinoza's thought. In order to establish this let us look at what commentators, and Schelling himself, say about the influences in Schelling's works. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph

Von Schelling (1775-1854), German Philosopher, is the second of the great Post-Kantian Idealists, and a friend and disciple of Fichte. It has been acknowledged by virtually all of Schelling's commentators that his great influences are: Kant (via Fichte), Fichte and Spinoza (cf. for instance Richards (2002:145). The young Schelling was a theology student at the University of Tübingen where he befriended figures such as Hegel, Holderlin, Schlegel and Novalis. Later in life Schelling moved to Berlin where his lectures were initially attended by prominent academic figures such as Kierkegaard, Engels, Bakunin, and von Humboldt, but soon these lectures became largely ignored by the leading thinkers of his day probably due to Schelling's later and somewhat erratic philosophical development. Around the time when Schelling was still at Tübingen he became very influenced by Fichte's views, a fact which is made clear in the title of a work published in 1795, On the I as a Principle of Philosophy. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, this work aimed at explaining Fichte's views in the *Wissenschaftslehre* project. Interesting to note also that in the same year, Schelling published another work entitled Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism. The term dogmatism in the title refers to Spinoza's materialism, and the term criticism to Fichte's idealism. Thus, even at this early stage of Schelling's philosophical development one can see Schelling's interest in both Fichte's and Spinoza's philosophy.

Copleston (1963:94) sheds more light on this issue when he says that "though Fichte's thought formed a point of departure for his reflections, Schelling very soon showed the independence of his mind. In particular, he was dissatisfied with Fichte's view of Nature as being simply an instrument for moral action". Thus, one could say that Schelling was indeed very much influenced by Fichte's views, the publication of the On the I as a Principle of Philosophy is irrefutable evidence of this fact. For Schelling, however, Fichte represented a

point of departure, just as Kant had represented a point of departure for Fichte. Through studying and commenting on Fichte's thought, Schelling understood that Kant's Critical Philosophy was heading in the right direction, Fichte himself had already given the first steps in solving some of its inherent problems, but there were still unanswered questions and unresolved problems left. As such Schelling decided to drink from the same source that Fichte had already done, that is, Schelling sought the solution to these unanswered questions and unsolved problems in Spinoza's philosophy. It is worth referring to a letter Schelling wrote to Hegel on the 4th of February 1795, the same year when he published On the I as a Principle of Philosophy and the Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism, where he explicitly states in a letter to Hegel that *"I have become a Spinozist!".*[23] And two years later, in 1797, with the publication of the

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[23] FJW Von Schelling, Letter dated 4th February 1795 to Hegel, quote by Hans Michael Baumgartner in "The Unconditioned in Knowing", in The Emergence of German Idealism, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 244; (cf also Briefe von und an Hegel, Vol 4, ed. J Hoffmeister, Hamburg: 1969, 1.22). NB. This quote needs qualifying here so to avoid misquoting. Schelling says in the letter to Hegel: *"In the meanwhile, I have become a Spinozist - Don't be amazed; you are about to hear in what way. For Spinoza, the world (the object pure and simple, as opposed to the subject) was all; for me, it is the I. It seems to me that the real difference between critical philosophy and dogmatic philosophy lies in the fact that the critical philosophy begins with the absolute I (the I which is as yet unconditioned by any object), and dogmatic philosophy begins with the absolute object, or the not-I. The ultimate consequence of the latter is Spinoza's system; of the former, the Kantian system. Philosophy must begin with the unconditioned. Now the question is where this unconditioned lies: in the I or in the not-I. When this question is decided, everything is decided. For me, the supreme principle of all philosophy is the pure, absolute I....The absolute I comprises an infinite sphere of absolute being; within this sphere, finite spheres take shape, which arise through the restriction of the absolute sphere... ".* It is clear from this letter that at this particular early stage of Schelling's philosophical development Schelling's subscribing to Spinozism is to be understood as that Schelling agreed with Spinoza that philosophy requires a first principle, an absolute, which serves as the most basic and simple principle out of which all philosophy must be derived. Schelling, however, at this early stage of his career, disagrees with Spinoza about the nature of the absolute, which Schelling deems to be an *I* and Spinoza *the world.* Such an understanding of the absolute, I understand, still places Schelling under the influence of Fichte, and Fichte's thesis of the Absolute I. That said, Richards (2002:176) notes that a few years later Schelling's understanding of the absolute changed dramatically. Richards (2002:176) writes: *"Schelling expressed it in January 1801, casting a mirror image of his earlier position: There is an idealism of nature and*

Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature Schelling unashamedly pays tribute to Spinoza's thought, states that Spinoza's though had not been fully understood previously, and that it had now been revived. I quote Schelling (1988:53-54):

> Spinoza has lain unrecognized for over a hundred years (I presume Schelling means here that Spinoza's though had been dormant and that it had now been revived through the pantheism controversy). The view of his philosophy as a mere theory of objectivity did not allow the true absolute to be perceived in it (Schelling refers here to the classical reading of Spinoza as a materialist and atheist). The definiteness with which he recognized subject-object as the necessary and eternal character of absoluteness shows the high destiny implicit in his philosophy, whose full development was reserved for a later age (I presume Schelling means here his own age). [my brackets]

Thus, as I mentioned above, it is fair to say that even at the time of Schelling's early philosophical development Fichte represented for Schelling a departure point and Spinoza provided the answers Schelling so much sought in trying to solve the problems faced by the Fichtean philosophy. The following passage of Bowie (2003:74) corroborates my views here: *"Schelling's philosophy in the 1790s wavers between an attachment to Fichte and to Spinoza".*

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an idealism of the ego. The former is for me the original, the latter derived" (The Romantic Conception of Life, Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002). I understand that this passage of Richards confirms that later Schelling changed his mind and held that the absolute is an indentity of thought and extension in nature, and that the form of idealism which had been previously advocated by philosophers such as Kant is a derivation or a particularisation of that earlier form of idealism. That is, without an idealism of nature, there would not be

That is, to paraphrase Bowie here, Schelling wavers between defending the critical philosophy of Kant as already developed by Fichte and Spinoza's philosophy and the answers it provided to the problems faced by Fichte's system.

A related issue that concerns us at this stage is the development of Schelling's philosophical views. Commentators have usually divided Schelling's philosophy into three distinct stages. The early stage of Schelling's philosophy can be referred to as his critical philosophy stage. Schelling soon became dissatisfied with it because he understood it represented only 'half-of-the-picture'. The critical philosophy only tries to account for the subject-object relation. That is, it only tries to explain how subjective entities experience and gain knowledge of objects in reality. Moreover, the critical philosophy turns reality, and nature, into a mechanical environment, just there, for the use and experiencing of subjective entities. The critical philosophy does not explain how, we, human beings, as part and parcel of nature, come to be; it does not explain how the subjective comes to be out of the objective. As such, Schelling thought that the critical philosophy had not explained 'the absolute' in a satisfactory manner. Schelling understood that the "absolute", that concept, that foundation to philosophy had not been fully or correctly explained by Fichte. Schelling understood that Fichte's system had failed to solve this problem as it had not explained the whole story, that is, Fichte's system still referred to nature as just there for human use and experiencing, and it did not understand human beings as being part and parcel of nature. Fichte had not broken away from this aspect of the Kantian philosophy. Schelling's unhappiness with the critical philosophy prompts him into his second philosophical phase, it prompts him to write his *Naturphilosophie*. The *Naturphilosophie* attempts to answer those questions left unanswered by the critical philosophy,

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possible an idealism of the ego. I shall explain this further in the main body of the text as the

it attempts to provide the other "half-of-the-picture". This new project brought fame to Schelling and influenced many romantics, such as Goethe. Whilst reading the writings which are part of this second phase of Schelling's philosophical development one cannot help but associate his ideas there with Spinoza's philosophical views. In his third and last phase Schelling was concerned with merging both philosophies together. He was concerned with merging the critical philosophy and the *Naturphilosophie*. He was concerned with explaining the subject-object relation as well as the object-subject relation. He was after the ultimate absolute, the ultimate foundation of all reality, and this fact pushed Schelling further towards Spinozism. The following passage of Bowie (1993:77) corroborates this as he writes that *"in the philosophy Schelling writes between 1801 and circa 1807, which is referred to as the 'identity philosophy', he moves more in the direction of Spinoza than of Fichte"*. In this thesis I shall focus on the second and third phase of Schelling's philosophy, since Schelling's Spinozism is more prominent in these stages of Schelling's philosophical development. Let me now demonstrate my strategy in dealing with Schelling's Spinozism in this chapter.

SCHELLING'S PHILOSOPHICAL DEVELOPMENT AND METHODOLOGY USED IN DEALING WITH SCHELLING'S SPINOZISM

It is commonly agreed by Schelling's commentators that his philosophical development is somehow erratic. Most commentators, such as Esposito (1977), White (1983) and Snow (1996) agree that Schelling's philosophical development can be described into three phases: the Fichtean phase - which includes his early essay On the I as a Principle of Philosophy or on the

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chapter progresses.

Unconditioned in Human Knowledge (1795); the Spinozist phase - which includes all writings in the *Naturphilosophie* project; and the later Schelling - which includes the Philosophy of Mythology and Philosophy of Revelation, which were published in 1854, and which is considered by commentators a more theological and less philosophical phase of Schelling, despite Schelling claiming otherwise. However, Norman (2004) identifies four phases in Schelling's philosophical development and as such I have decided to follow her views here for the sake of being more precise. According to Norman (2004) the first phase of Schelling's development is his Fichtean phase and it includes the On the I (1795). His second phase is his Spinozist phase and it includes all the writings in the *Naturphilosophie* project, such as the Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature (1797, 1803) and On the World Soul (1798). The third phase begins when Schelling start turning his attention to the inplication of his *Naturphilosophie* project for God and for human freedom and it includes the On Human Freedom (1809) and the Ages of the World (1811, 1813, and 1815). This phase represents a departure from his views that ideal and real have a symmetrical relation, and thus it is a departure from Spinozism; and it is where Schelling started to theorise that reality requires a ground - the real. The last phase of Schelling's development encompasses all the writings of his late career and it includes his Philosophy of Mythology and Philosophy of Revelation (1854) and which are meant to provide experiential instances describing the metaphysical speculations of his earlier thought; and as I mentioned before this last phase of Schelling's development is commonly regarded as more theological than philosophical by commentators despite the fact that Schelling claimed otherwise. I wish here to draw the reader's attention to the fact that I shall concentrate my efforts in dealing with the writings of Schelling's second phase since this is agreed to be Schelling's Spinozist phase, but I shall refer to writings in his later phase when appropriate.

My strategy in dealing with Schelling's Spinozism will be similar to my strategy in dealing with Fichte's Spinozism. That is, I shall divide this chapter into thematic subsections dealing with topics such as the similarities between Schelling's and Spinoza's metaphysical systems, I shall consider if Schelling and Spinoza were advocating pantheism and or hylozoism, and I shall enquire into the ethical implications of Schelling's and Spinoza's metaphysical views in a chapter on Deep Ecology.

Another important issue here concerns my choice of commentators on Schelling. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, Fichte's philosophy has recently been revived, gaining even a fashionable status, due to the publication of a number of articles and books by commentators such as Henrich, Breazeale, Pippin and Zöller. Unfortunately, the same has not yet happened with Schelling's philosophy. Very few articles and books have been published on Schelling recently in English or by English speaking commentators, and thus, I must rely mainly on old commentators, and the few English translations of German commentators' papers on Schelling, for an understanding and account of Schelling's philosophy. Hopefully, this situation of a lack of literature on Schelling will change in the near future as I understand that Schelling's philosophy offers us the proper and natural progression from the Kantian and Fichtean philosophy and into Hegel's philosophical views.

CHAPTER 7: FROM KANT TO FICHTE TO SCHELLING: SPINOZA'S CONTRIBUTION TO ABSOLUTE IDEALISM

SCHELLING'S PHILOSOPHY OF NATURE AND SPINOZA'S SUBSTANCE

The first aspect of Schelling's philosophy which strikes me as being related to his debt to Spinoza's views concerns Schelling's views on nature, and as such, I shall deal with this issue first. Schelling's Philosophy of Nature project, his *Naturphilosophie* project, was born out of his dissatisfaction concerning certain aspects of the Kantian philosophy, and it was also a reaction to Fichte's attempt to resolve the problems posed by this same aspect. The first aspect of the Kantian philosophy that Schelling found so problematic concerned the Kantian understanding of nature. That is, in the Critical Philosophy of Kant nature plays a particular and secondary role to human beings, or better said, nature's role is relative to the role that human beings play within the Critical Philosophy. It is worth briefly reminding the reader of Kant's views on nature here.

In the Critique of Pure Reason Kant understands nature as that which is subject to necessary laws, whilst human beings are not subjected to these necessary laws; rather, human beings are free rational beings. Human beings, however, are able to gain access to these necessary laws, Kant understands, because human cognition relies on the fact that there are certain forms of thought, i.e. those categories which are integral to the human understanding, which structure what is given to human intuition, i.e. those sense perceptions which are given to the human understanding through human sensibility. For instance, I am able to infer that event A has been *caused* by event B because the *category of causation* that is present in my understanding decodes the association between these two events which are being presented to me

through my sensibility. In other words, one of the points that Kant is trying to make in the *First* Critique, a point that serves as a reply to Hume's scepticism and his argument on causality, is that we should not direct our attention to making claims about nature itself, we should rather focus on what could be said with certitude about the way we attain knowledge and our knowledge of nature as it is presented to us. Bowie (1993:31) corroborates this when he says:

> The point of Kant's theoretical philosophy, prompted by Hume's arguments on causality, was not to make claims about nature itself, and to concentrate on what could be said with certainty about the subject's knowledge of nature. Nature was therefore considered as that which is subsumed under the laws of the understanding.

In the Critique of Practical Reason Kant conceives nature and human beings in much the same way. That is, nature is that which is subjected to deterministic laws and human beings are the bearers of free rational wills. This time, however, nature is characterised as being just there, so that human beings can impose their will on nature, so that human beings can modify nature to fit their wantings and needs. In the *Second* Critique human beings view nature as an objective entity to be modified by human subjectivity, or better said, nature is that which is to be changed and acted upon so that it fits humans' wills. For instance, I will, I desire, I want somewhere to sit, so I will chop a tree up, and use the wood to build a chair for me to sit on. To sum up, I impose my will on nature.

Schelling saw two problems with the Critical Philosophy of Kant. Schelling first takes issue with the *First* and *Second* Critique portrayal of nature as being set apart from human beings

or vice versa. That is, Schelling saw a problem with viewing nature as being a completely different entity to human beings, or to put it the other way round, Schelling saw a problem with viewing human beings as not part and parcel of nature. Schelling understood that by viewing human beings and nature in such light Kant's philosophy was open to be questioned about the problem of interaction between human beings and nature. This problem can be formalised as follows: how can the subjective successfully interact with and act upon the objective? That is, since subjective and objective have different natures, since human beings and nature are essentially different, how can they establish a successful relation of the kind required for human experience and the attaining of knowledge of reality, and of the kind required by human beings to impose their will upon reality? It could be said that this problem is akin to the mind body problem faced by Cartesian philosophy, the problem of two different natures or essences interacting with each other. And parasitic on the problem of the interaction between the subjective and the objective is the following problem: if human beings are part and parcel of nature, how can human subjectivity arise from something that is entirely objective? Schelling understood that Kant did not provide an account for the existence of subjective beings, such as us, in his philosophical system. Kant simply assumed subjectivity and he did not attempt to explain the coming to be of subjectivity, and of subjective beings.

The second aspect that Schelling found to be a problem with the Critical Philosophy of Kant concerns its reliance on dichotomies, and as a consequence of this, Schelling found it to be a serious problem with the Critical Philosophy that it did not provide a first and simple principle, it did not provide an absolute. That is, Schelling, as did Fichte and their contemporaries, understood philosophy to be a science and as such it required a first principle, a basic and simple principle, out of which a whole philosophical system could be derived - this first principle is the

'absolute'. For Schelling and his contemporaries philosophy had to find its first principle just as other sciences, like Physics and Biology, had done within their fields of study. Moreover, Schelling and his contemporaries also understood that the nature of philosophy is to explain the whole of reality, and not particular aspects of it, and as such, the search for this absolute principle was not an easy one. Needless to say that Schelling, as did Fichte and their peers, understood that Kant's philosophical system had failed on this account also. It is interesting to note here the following passage from White (1983:7) where he comments on Schelling's Spinozism and where he explains Schelling's and his contemporaries' understanding that philosophy is a science, that it concerns the whole of reality, and that it requires an absolute principle.

> Schelling shares Spinoza's understanding both of what philosophy is and of what kind of principle philosophy needs. The two agree that philosophy is concerned with all of reality and not with a specific part of it; whereas the herpetologist studies snakes and frogs, the philosopher studies the whole. One consequence of this difference is that the principle...of philosophy must be of a different sort from the principles of the special sciences. The principles of the herpetologist - the starting point for his investigations - include methods shared by all biologists and the scheme of classification according to which reptiles and amphibians are in a different category from birds and insects. Since philosophy is the study of the whole, it lacks a clearly defined subject matter; it also lacks a presupposed method, for it is not a part of a more comprehensive science whose method it

> could adopt. One way of expressing this difference between herpetology and philosophy is to say that the former is a relative science, the latter an absolute one.

It is also important to acknowledge at this point that Fichte tried to improve on the Critical Philosophy of Kant in his *Wissenschaftslehre* project. As such, it is appropriate here to refer back to the classical reading of the project, the reading of Schelling and Hegel, as criticised and analysed in the previous chapter. According to the classical reading, the main thesis of the project could be described as follows: there is an entity, an Absolute I, that somehow continuously creates the whole of reality, including nature as a not-I and individual consciousnesses as relative "I"s. The reader will recall that the Absolute I, according to the classical reading, according to Schelling and Hegel, is to be identified with an immanent God. An immanent God that continuously creates reality, including Nature as a not-I and individual consciousnesses as relative "I"s. The young Schelling, Schelling at his first stage of philosophical development, was sympathetic to Fichte's views here as the publication of On the I as a Principle of Philosophy and of the Philosophical Letters demonstrates. The more mature Schelling, Schelling at his subsequent stages of philosophical development, however, understood that Fichte had not been completely successful in improving on the Critical Philosophy of Kant.

According to Schelling the Fichtean system had accomplished a few improvements on the Critical Philosophy, but it was still not entirely successful in dealing with those two problems raised by Schelling himself. The Fichtean system had given the first steps towards a first principle for all philosophy, and Schelling understood that the main improvement that Fichte had furnished the Critical Philosophy with is that it had tried to establish and characterise the absolute as a first principle in the figure of the Absolute I. Schelling, however, had two

problems with the Fichtean system. The first problem that Schelling has with Fichte's views is that in trying to establish the Absolute I as a first principle to all philosophy the Fichtean system argued that the Absolute I would ensure that the subjective could experience and enact his will in the objective. Schelling, however, understood that the Fichtean system had only established that the subjective *could* experience and enact his will in the objective, the Fichtean system had not demonstrated that this experiencing and enacting was *successful.* That is, the subjective could experience and enact in the objective, but this is not to say for instance that *my experiencing of what happens in reality corresponds to what truly happens in reality* or that *there is a real correspondence between what I try to impose upon reality and what really occurs in reality.* This could be described as a problem of synchronicity or tuning between what happens in reality and what I experience, between what I try to impose upon reality and what happens in reality. This problem is well explained by Žižek (1997:65) when he refers to the case of enacting in a virtual reality. I quote:

> When I raise my hand in order to push an object in the virtual space, this object effectively moves - my illusion, of course, is that it was the movement of my hand that directly cause the dislocation of the object; that is, in my immersion, I overlook the intricate mechanism of computerized coordination, homologous to the role of God guaranteeing the coordination between the two series in occasionalism.

Schelling did not conceive that Fichte's Absolute I could act as the guarantor that I can experience reality and that I can impose my will upon reality, and that the Absolute I could also

act as the guarantor of the synchronicity between what I experience and what happens in reality and what I try to impose upon reality and what happens in reality. I understand that Schelling would consider this answer an unsatisfactory *ad hoc* manoeuvre on the side of Fichte. The problem identified by Schelling here is how the finite interacts with other finites, a problem that is not dealt with by Fichte within his thesis of the Absolute I, at least insofar as the classical interpretation of Schelling and Hegel is concerned, since this thesis only deals with the interaction between the infinite and the finites. This is a problem I have dealt with in the previous chapter when I suggested that the classical and the modern interpretation of the concept of the Absolute I could be seen as complementary; that is, the classical interpretation deals with the interaction between the infinite and the finites and the modern interpretation deals with the interaction between finites (vide supra pp. 98-99).

But let me now go back to Schelling's first complaint against the Fichtean philosophy. Following from the problem identified by Schelling in the Fichtean system, Schelling understood that Fichte's conception of the absolute, of the first principle of philosophy had to be characterised differently if it were to succeed in establishing itself as the first principle of all philosophy. In this light, Schelling considered that Fichte's Absolute I was not the absolute, the first principle of philosophy, and this pushed Schelling to search for the absolute principle of all philosophy, and this in turn, enabled Schelling to propose a new characterisation for the absolute, and I shall deal with this during the unfolding of this section.

Schelling's second complaint against the Fichtean philosophy lies in the fact that Fichte still regarded nature in much the same terms as Kant had previously done. That is, nature is that which is subjected to deterministic laws, nature is that which is objective, nature is that which provides human beings with content for their experiences, nature is that which is subjected to

change by human beings' wills. In the Fichtean philosophy human beings are still completely divorced from nature. Human beings and nature are seen as two different kinds. In a letter to Fichte in 1801, Schelling explicitly voices his discontent with Fichte's views on nature:

> I am thoroughly aware how small an area of consciousness nature must fall into, according to your conception of it. For you, nature has no speculative significance, only a teleological one. But are you really of the opinion, for example, that light is only there so that rational beings can also see each other when they talk to each other, and that air is there so that when they hear each other they can talk to each other?[24]

And in 1806, Schelling is even more aggressive in his rebuking of Fichte's views:

> ...in the last analysis what is the essence of his (Fichte's) whole opinion of nature? It is this: that nature should be used...and that it is there for nothing more than to be used; his principle, according to which he looks at nature, is the economic teleological principle.[25]

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[24] NB. Walter Schulz, ed., Fichte-Schelling Briefwechsel, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1968, p. 140. The quoted passage was cited and translated by Andrew Bowie, in his Schelling and Modern European Philosophy, London and New York: Routledge, 1993, p. 58.

[25] NB. Passage cited and translated by Andrew Bowie in his Schelling and Modern European Philosophy, p. 58.

To say that Schelling showed dissatisfaction with such a view of nature would be an understatement. In fact White (1983:47) comments that Schelling takes issue with Fichte on this issue when he writes:

> Schelling...is convinced...that Fichte's theories were crippled by his defective understanding of nature. For Fichte, whatever his true practical teaching may be, nature remains merely a means for man to use to his own ends, dead matter with which man can work. This conception is, Schelling insists, inadequate as a theoretical explanation of nature.

The crux of the problem with Kant's and Fichte's views on nature and human beings for Schelling lies in the fact that in their philosophical systems human beings are not part and parcel of nature, human beings and nature are essentially different. That is to say that within their systems nature is rather out there for the experiencing (as in Kant's first Critique and Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* project), use and change (as in Kant's second Critique), and enjoyment (as in Kant's third Critique) of human beings.

It could be said here that Kant's and Fichte's views on nature have strong echoes of the 'Dominion' reading of Genesis, and it is important to state here that the 'Dominion' reading of Genesis is a classical interpretation of the first book of the scriptures. Such a reading must have been familiar to Kant since he was influenced by pietism, and it must have been familiar to Fichte also since the young Fichte was a theology student and a theist or a deist. This reading has its foundations in Genesis 1:29 where it is written that God says: *"Have many children, so that your descendants will live all over the earth and bring it under their control. I am putting*

you in charge of the fish, the birds and all the wild animals". According to this reading human beings are *other* than nature, human beings must control nature, nature is there for human beings to experience, use and enjoy. Some might raise the question here regarding the 'Stewardship' reading of that same passage of the Genesis. The 'Stewardship' reading is a modern reading of Genesis and it understands that human beings have only been made stewards of creation, and if human beings wreck creation they must answer for it. Kant and Fichte could not have been familiar with this reading since this is a modern interpretation of that passage of Genesis. This reading, however, is of little help in solving the problems raised by Schelling since this reading also understands that human beings are set apart from nature, that human beings are *other* than nature.

I note that Schelling seems to be moving away from this Judaeo-Christian perspective and influence. Schelling seems to be moving away to what was perceived as an individualist conception of religion and philosophy for life in the figure of Christianity and towards a more holistic approach to religion and life as a whole in the figure of Ancient Civilisations. This was well explained by Plant (1998:11-29) who maintained that at the time when Hegel was writing his philosophical system there was a feeling of nostalgia in Germany, a feeling of nostalgia towards Ancient Greece. In Ancient Greece life was more *holistic*, that is, religion, family, work, nature, etc. were all inter-linked via a religious system. Moreover, the performance of religious duties in those ancient societies involved emotions, imagination and the intellect, and there was also a sense of common purpose and community, and as such, there was a more harmonic social ethos. Hegel, and his contemporaries, Schelling included, understood that Christianity had destroyed this holistic approach to life through its fragmentation of society. The Judaeo-Christian God is completely divorced from human beings, and human beings are

completely divorced from the rest of creation. Hegel, and his contemporaries, Schelling included, understood that it was impossible to import Ancient Greek religious practices into Germany, and thus, their attempt to resist the fragmentation of reality and societies and to bring reality and societies to a more holistic mode was to re-create and re-interpret Christianity and its doctrines. Schelling seems to fit extremely well within this scenario painted by Plant, as Schelling rejects dichotomies such as the human being-nature dichotomy and the creator-creation dichotomy as his philosophical writings show. In rejecting the creator-creation and human being-nature dichotomies Schelling seems to be rejecting those Judaeo-Christian doctrines, and advocating a more holistic view of reality.

Following from what I have argued and maintained thus far another point must be asserted here. That is to say that following from Schelling's understanding that Fichte had failed in establishing the nature of the absolute, and following from the fact that Schelling considered Kant's and Fichte's understanding of nature as unsatisfactory, following from these two issues, Schelling is prompted to find solutions as he was convinced that the absolute could be successfully established and that a more satisfactory account of nature reached. In his search for answers Schelling, in a stroke of inspiration, foresaw that an account of nature where nature is characterised as the absolute could provide him with a satisfactory answer to those two questions that so much troubled him. This point will become clearer during the unfolding of this section as I deal with some important texts of the *Naturphilosophie* project, such as the Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature, On the World Soul, First Outline of a System of Philosophy, and Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie, which I shall do forthwith.

It is commonly acknowledged that the *Naturphilosophie* project emerged in 1797 with the publication of the Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature and was further developed in the

subsequent years with the publication of On the World Soul in 1798 and First Outline of a System of Philosophy in 1799. These works brought fame to Schelling and the support of figures such as Goethe, and it also helped Schelling secure an appointment for a professorship at the University of Jena in 1789.

The publication of the Ideas by Schelling in 1797 marks his break with the Fichtean philosophy and as such it represents a new phase in Schelling's philosophical development. Two years prior to the publication of the Ideas Schelling had left the Tübingen Theological Seminar, where he had befriended Hegel and Hölderlin, and had taken up a position as a private tutor to an aristocratic family; a family which in 1796, the year prior to the publication of the Ideas in 1797, moved to Leipzig. Whilst in Leipzig, Schelling immersed himself in the study of medicine, physics, mathematics and chemistry, where he arrived at a new concept of nature, a concept of a polarised and dynamic nature, which went against the Fichtean, Kantian and Newtonian characterisation of nature as purely mechanical or as governed purely by necessary laws. On the World Soul and the First Outline of a System of Philosophy were published a few years later and are an attempt by Schelling to expand and explain further his views on the issue of a philosophy of nature. It is noteworthy here that Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* project represents an interesting contribution to the history of the philosophy of sciences as Schelling sought to explain his philosophical views on nature by seeking support of scientific observations, experiments and theories, and the project is also interesting per se since it defends the kind of holistic approach to the natural sciences that has become influential in recent years in the works of complexity theorists, such as Fritjof Capra, Stuart Kauffman and Brian Goodwin, i.e. those

theorists who hold the view that everything is involved in a web of relations and where every thing bears a relation to every other thing.[26]

The central thesis of the Ideas is that nature as a whole must be viewed as an organism. It is perhaps useful here to quote the following passage of Copleston (1946:48-49) on nature before progressing into a more detailed assessment:

> As he moved away from the position of Fichte, Schelling came to conceive of nature as a meaningful organism, a totality, striving upwards towards consciousness under the impulse of the World-Soul or principle of organisation of the cosmos...nature is not the dead material of our duty, but is a dynamic process in which things are but becoming. There is one stream of life in Nature, but Nature, which is always striving after the perfect representation of the Absolute, differentiates herself on various levels into those individuals, the succession and transitory character of which betray the fact that they are unsuccessful attempts to manifest the absolute. In its highest production, however, human consciousness, nature is enabled to turn back on herself and to realise her unity in reflection.

The following passage from Snow (1996:68-69) is also appropriate here as it acknowledges that Schelling in the Ideas is moving away from Fichte and closer to Spinoza, and also that Schelling develops the view that nature is to be regarded as an organic and living system. I quote:

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[26] NB. For more on complexity theories see Fritjof Capra, Tao of Physics, London: Flamingo, 1992 and The Turning Point, London: Flamingo, 1997; Stuart Kauffman, The Origin of Order: Self Organisation, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993 and At Home in the Universe: The Search for Laws of Self-Organisation and Complexity, New York: Viking Press, 1995; and Brian

> We almost see Schelling thinking aloud as he accomplishes three very important things: he declares the philosophy of nature to be an essential part of philosophy, without which philosophy could not achieve systematic unity; he distances himself from Fichte and moves closer to Spinoza, who was especially influential on his concept of the absolute; and there is further development of the view of the world of nature as an organic, living system, and idea which first appeared in the "Treatises".

In order to demonstrate that nature is better understood as an organism Schelling puts forward various arguments that rely on physics and chemistry to demonstrate that the Newtonian, Kantian and Fichtean systems are mistaken in their views that nature and human beings are essentially different, that nature is that which is objective and the human being is that which is subjective. This reliance on physics and chemistry, and in other sciences remains a feature of Schelling's writings throughout his *Naturphilosophie* project, and as such it is perhaps appropriate here to quote a couple of passages as examples. In the Ideas Schelling (1988:250) writes:

> How absolutely one and the same matter gives birth to the multiplicity of forms has been sufficiently discoursed on in the foregoing. Just as, in the individual, its unity forms into difference only in the shape of magnetism, so it also does in the whole. The inner and essential identity is not thereby abolished, and remains the same under all the forms or potencies that it takes on in the metamorphosis. Just

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Goodwin, How the Leopard Changed its Spots: The Evolution of Complexity, London: Phoenix,

> as the leaves, blossoms and collective organs of the plant are related to the identity of the plant, so the collective differences of bodies are related to the one substance, from which they proceeded by graduated change.

And On the History of Modern Philosophy Schelling (1994:123) writes:

> ...this subordination can also only be reached in stages, thus via a process. For matter always seeks to maintain its independence, as, e.g., in those inorganic deposits of animals with shells, which testify to their dependence on life via the form which is externally impressed on them, but which are internally inanimate; the inorganic, i.e. matter which lays claim to a being-itself, has here already entered the service of the organism, but without being completely conquered by it. The skeletal system of the higher animals is just this inorganic matter which has now been forced back inside and taken up into the inner life process, which in animals of lower order (the molluscs) is still external and appears as shell and casing. Even the animal of the higher classes still contains in the differentiation of its organs hints or reminiscences of the steps which the whole organic process of nature has climbed.

Schelling's views on nature are the outcome of his dissatisfaction with the Kantian, Fichtean and Newtonian understanding of nature. As such it is appropriate for me now to refer back to Schelling's rejection of the dualism between subjective and objective. On commenting on

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1994.

Schelling's dissatisfaction with the Kantian dualism of subjectivity and objectivity Bowie (1993:31) writes:

> The vital factor which had sustained the actuality of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* is its refusal to see the thinking subject as simply opposed to nature as a world of objects, because the subject is itself part of nature. The *Naturphilosophie* is another product of Schelling's dissatisfaction with Kantian dualism;

As I mentioned above one of the aspects of the Kantian philosophy Schelling took issue with is its separation of human beings as subjective entities and nature as an object for human beings. This separation leads to the problem of interaction between entities of different natures; that is, if human beings are subjective and nature is objective, human beings and nature are entities with different essences, then how can these entities possibly interact? Schelling needs to provide a metaphysical system in which such a dichotomy does not occur, and this is what he does in the introduction to the Ideas. There he questions the Kantian system as a philosophical system which quite rightly reflects upon itself and on the nature of philosophy, but which becomes trapped into this philosophical self-reflection and forgets that the human condition is part of a greater totality. In the introduction to the Ideas Schelling also asserts that the Kantian system is a system obsessed with dichotomies and that as a consequence of this obsession it severs the human being from the reality it is part of. For Schelling the Kantian philosophy has forgotten that prior to philosophical reflection, human beings viewed themselves as integral parts of nature, human beings did not question the fact that they were part of a greater whole. The following passages are enlightening. I quote Schelling (1988:10-11):

> As soon as man sets himself in opposition to the external world, the first step to philosophy has been taken. With that separation, reflections first begin; he separates from now on what Nature has always united, separates the object from the intuition, the concept from the image, finally (in that he becomes his own object) himself from himself. But this separation is only *means* not *end*....Man is not born to waste his mental power in conflict against the fantasy of an imaginary world, but to exert all his powers upon a world which has influence upon him, lets him feel its forces, and upon which he can react. Between him and the world, therefore, no rift must be established; contact and reciprocal action must be possible between the two, for only so does man become man...But its preoccupation with dissection does not extend only to the phenomenal world; so far as it separates the spiritual principle from this, it fills the intellectual world with chimeras, against which, because they lie beyond all reason, it is not even possible to fight. It makes the separation between man and the world permanent, because it treats the latter as a thing in itself, which neither intuition, nor imagination, neither understanding nor reason, can reach.

The attack on the Kantian system is implicit at this stage of the Ideas, but it does become explicit later as the text develops. It is clear, however, at this stage that Schelling understands that the Kantian philosophy has lost its way in seeing the activity of reflection as its ultimate goal because when reflection or philosophising is seen in such light it turns upon itself and divorces itself from reality. I understand that Schelling has probably in mind here the *First* Critique of

Kant, a text where reason reflects on reason, where the limits of knowledge are set, and where Kant establishes that we cannot know reality in-itself but only as it appears to us. It is this dichotomy between reality in-itself and reality as it appears to us, the dichotomy between the real and the ideal, the dichotomy between the subjective and the objective that is so problematic for Schelling. And Schelling understands that the roots of these dichotomies lay in the fact that reflection or philosophising have made reflection or philosophising its object, and as such it has turned itself into a subject and an object for itself at the same time, and lastly, it has also divorced itself from reality as a whole. Schelling rather understands that the activity of reflection and philosophising should be the means to understand reality and the human condition, and once this understanding is lost all those dichotomies and problems arise. More important here is the fact that Schelling asserts that we must conceive of a time prior to reflection or philosophising turning upon itself, a time when the real and the ideal, a time when the objective and the subjective, a time when reality in-itself and reality as it appears to us, a time when reality was united, a time when reality was a whole. It is important for me here to quote the following passage of the Ideas where Schelling maintains this thesis, and where he acknowledges that Spinoza was the first to try to deal with the philosophical problem of interaction between the objective and subjective, between the real and the ideal; I quote Schelling (1988:27):

> Spinoza, as it seems, was worried at a very early stage about the connection of our ideas with things outside us, and could not tolerate the separation which had been set up between them. He saw that ideal and real (thought and object) are most intimately united in our nature. That we have ideas of things outside us, that our ideas even reach out *beyond* the things, he could explain to himself only in terms

> of our *ideal nature*; but that these ideas correspond to actual *things*, he had to explain in terms of the *affections* and *determinations* of the ideal in us. Therefore we could not become aware of the real, save in contrast to the ideal, or of the ideal, save in contrast to the real. Accordingly, no separation could occur between the actual things and our ideas of them. Concepts and things, thought and extension, were, for this reason, one and the same for him, both only modifications of the one and the same ideal nature.

Thus, for Schelling, the dichotomy between the subjective and the objective can only be overcome if the subjective and the objective, if the ideal and the real, if human beings and nature, are only ill founded dichotomies, only if these have an identity in the absolute. These dichotomies emerge from human preoccupation with labelling and categorising things in nature, a preoccupation that leads human beings to lose sight that human beings, themselves, are part of this same nature that is being labelled and categorised. As such, human beings lose sight that everything, human beings and nature, are unified in an absolute principle. It is only if the subjective and the objective are envisaged as being united in an absolute principle that the problem between the interaction between the subjective and the objective, between the ideal and the real, between human beings and nature can be solved. And during the development of his *Naturphilosophie*, during his attempt to uncover the subjective in the objective, the ideal in the real, during his attempt to demonstrate that human beings cannot be abstracted from nature, Schelling asserts that Nature as a whole, i.e. as essence and as physical system, is this absolute and unifying principle.

Schelling's On the World Soul is an attempt of his to further develop the *Naturphilosophie* project, which he had originally portrayed in his Ideas. Whilst in the Ideas he moves from the ideal to the real by diffusing the dichotomy between ideal and real, in the On the World Soul he moves from the real to the ideal by demonstrating that that which is commonly considered objective, i.e. nature, is in fact also subjective. His argument here is also based on scientific observations and experiments and on theoretical scientific paradigms. Schelling understands that if one observes the natural world as a whole, if one observes organic and inorganic nature, one perceives that nature as a whole is extremely dynamic, rather than merely mechanical as Kant, Fichte and Newton would have it. This dynamism in organic and inorganic nature leads one to reach the conclusion that organic and inorganic nature share a common principle, a common principle that is responsible for all changes in nature as a whole. Beiser (2002:515-519) notes that since nature as a whole cannot be described, according to Schelling, as a great mechanical apparatus, nature is better described as an organism, then dynamism in nature as a whole must be described as some sort of 'live force', a life force that underlies the whole of reality, a life force which ancient civilisations referred to as the 'world soul'. Schelling's point is that the world, i.e. nature as a whole, which is commonly seen as objective, is in fact already subjective; that is, there is already subjectivity in the world, there is already subjectivity in the objective. Note here that this view of reality does not share the problem faced by Kant and Fichte of how to account for the rise of subjectivity out of the objective if both are of different natures - in Schelling's case the subjective and the objective are united in a common principle, they are features of the absolute, and more importantly that which is commonly considered objective is already subjective. The following passages from White's (1983:52) comment On the World Soul corroborates my depiction of Schelling's views:

> He (Schelling) seeks to establish that observing the natural world as a whole "leads to a common principle that, fluctuating between inorganic and organic nature, contains the first cause of all alterations in the former and the ultimate ground of all activity in the latter"...If the organic and inorganic share a common principle, then they must be homogeneous; they are...both dynamic rather than mechanical...Schelling reasons, the natural world cannot be adequately conceived of as a great machine; it must rather be understood as the manifestation of the primal animate force known to the ancients as the "world soul". [my brackets]

In the First Outline of a System of Philosophy Schelling attempts to achieve the same conclusions of the On the World Soul through a priori argumentation. He understands he has to do this because On the World Soul only demonstrated his thesis through inductive arguments based on a posteriori scientific observations and experiments, and as such, he is attempting to make his argument more convincing. In order to do so Schelling asks: What is the source of dynamism in nature? The following passage of Schelling depicts this fully:

> The most universal problem, which encompasses all of nature and is thus the *highest* problem...is this: What is the universal source of activity in nature? What cause brought forth in nature the first dynamic separation (of which the mechanical is a mere consequence)? Or what cause first cast into the universal

> tranquillity of nature the seed of movement, into the universal identity duplicity, into the universal homogeneity of nature the first sparks of heterogeneity?[27]

By asking this question he means: What is the very source of reality? And why is reality so diverse? Why is reality so heterogeneous rather than a homogeneous mass of being? For Schelling the answer to all these questions lies in the assumption that reality in its original and homogenous form started to reflect upon itself so that it became an object for itself. For Schelling this is the first division of reality and this is the first event, which serves as the source for all those subsequent divisions of reality, subdivisions such as magnetism, electric charges, chemical reactions and organic matter itself, which, for Schelling, are empirical evidence of a dynamic, and not merely mechanical, nature. If nature cannot be depicted as a mechanical apparatus, and as it is dynamic then nature can only be assumed to be like a self-reflecting organism according to Schelling. It is worth quoting the following passage of White (1983:54) since it corroborates my views here:

> Schelling remains convinced that only a reflective structure can explain the introduction of difference into absolute identity: "It is impossible that [the primal unity], unlimited by anything external, transform itself into something finite for intuition save by becoming *object for itself*, that is, becoming finite in its infinitude". Magnetism, and thus all of nature, must have its origin in the primal self-reflection of the absolute, its primordial involution...

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[27] NB. FWJ Schelling, First Outline of a System of Philosophy, (3:220), quote in White

It seems to be quite clear that in the On the World Soul and in the First Outline of a System of Philosophy Schelling is attempting to convince the Kantian, the Fichtean and the natural scientists that there must be more to reality, to nature, than they had previously assumed; he tries to demonstrate that their assumption of reality, of nature, being merely objective, being merely a mechanistic whole is incoherent, and as such it must be rejected. Two points could be made here. Firstly, in rejecting the mechanical view of the world Schelling seems to be joining the German Romantic tradition, a tradition which understood that the whole of reality is interconnected and that it relies on a 'world soul'; where Schelling differs from his fellow German Romantics, such as Goethe, is that he does not write a poetry of nature, but philosophy of nature, as White (1983:54) notes. And secondly, it is clear that Schelling is rejecting the Kantian, Fichtean and Newtonian dualism between objectivity and subjectivity in favour of a duality within an absolute. That is, Schelling rejects the doctrine of dualism, that view of the world which understands that there are two different substances or forms of Being in reality and that sharply separates these two substances or forms of Being, and whilst doing so, Schelling proposes that what has been previously seen as a dualism by scholars such as Kant, Fichte and Newton is in fact a form of duality of aspects within monism, within the same substance or form of Being. Reality, for Schelling, is one, is united and is complex, and the duality of aspects, the duality of objectivity and subjectivity, represents aspects of this one, united and complex reality. Objectivity and subjectivity for Schelling are not entities with different essences, rather they are aspects or features of the one reality; objectivity and subjectivity are, to use an analogy, the two sides of the same coin, rather than two different coins as dualism would have. Or to put this in more Schelling-like terms: the absolute is the identity of ideal and real, or vice versa.

(1983:53-54).

This latter point is extremely similar to the reading that some commentators have of Spinoza's philosophy, that is to say that Spinoza defends monism but he also asserts that the substance has two attributes, namely thought and extension, which are aspects of the substance, which are different characterisations of the essence of the substance. This dualistic notion within monism is extremely important ontologically and epistemologically because it implies that I, as a human being, as an objective and subjective being, can describe the world using concepts, which is linked to the thought attribute, and I can also describe the world by pointing at things, which is linked to the extension attribute; moreover, my concepts perfectly match whatever they are related to in the world since the ideal is real and vice versa, there is no difference or gap between my concept p and the entity p in the world. In Schelling we find the same sort of notion because he also holds that the ideal is real and vice versa, and as such the implications are the same as in the case of Spinoza. I shall touch back on this point towards the end of this section when I deal with the similarity between Schelling's objectivity and subjectivity and Spinoza's thought and extension attribute.

Let me now sum up what has been said so far regarding Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* project: Schelling considers the ideal to be real, and vice versa, and he also understands that both the ideal and the real are united in an absolute principle, which he then asserts to be nature as a whole, a dynamic nature which can be better depicted as an organism rather than as a mechanical apparatus.

At this point in my discussion on Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* project it is important for me to refer to some of Esposito's comments on Schelling's project since his comments are very pertinent to my thesis that Schelling subscribed to some aspects of Spinozism. On commenting on Schelling's views on the *Naturphilosophie* project Esposito (1977:83-88) notes that Schelling

suggests another six secondary principles as being necessary if his project is to be successful, and if philosophy is to reach the status of a science, of a *Wissenschaft*. These principles are listed below, and I shall draw heavily from Esposito here:

i. *Nature constitutes a system*: that is, all phenomena must be presumed interconnected if the idea of the systematic unity of nature is to make sense. This is a straightforward proposition for the time, Hegel being probably the last philosopher to subscribe to such systematicity. The interesting thing about this proposition however is that Schelling and Spinoza are probably the only two prominent philosophers (if we do not consider the Romantics here) in the history of philosophy to propose that nature, as the whole of reality, as a system of interconnected relations which includes us, subjective entities that we are. Certainly, Kant, Fichte, Newton also saw nature as systematic and as a web of relations, they did not however include subjectivity within it, and they did not consider nature to be the absolute principle either.

ii. *Nature involves both process and product*: that is, if nature were simply product, then nature would be at rest, there would be no changes in reality. The idea of changes in reality requires nature to be seen also as a process, that is, it requires the status quo to be a momentous hindrance or challenge to a status quo which is still to come, and this future status quo to come will then be a momentous hindrance or challenge to another status quo to come, and this will occur ad infinitum. For Schelling the idea of process and product in nature are intertwined, there would not be one without the other. There would be no change in reality without process and product. If there were no process then reality would be completely still, and there would be no change in reality either without a product already there that presented a hindrance to the process ad

infinitum. To borrow an analogy from Schelling, nature is like a magnet and process and produce are like the negative and positive poles of the magnet; without one pole there is no magnet. As such, Schelling understands that nature must encompass both process and product, just as it does in Spinoza's system, and I shall come back to this point below.

iii. *The relation between product (natura naturata) and productivity (natura naturans) is ultimately one of identity*: that is, nature is a system, and as such, it is a unity within which process and product are intertwined in communion - there is an interplay between nature as process and nature as product. If process and product were not intertwined in communion, and were rather separated from each other, then nature's capacity for absolute productivity and self-creation would be limited. Schelling is arguing here in favour of the idea that nature is a self-creating, self-explanatory, and self-contained system, an idea that goes against the theist or deist views that nature has been willed to exist by a transcendent God. Also note the use of *natura naturans* and *natura naturata* by Schelling. Both concepts are classically linked to Spinoza's Ethics, who to my knowledge, coined the terms, and who described those terms in exactly the same way as Schelling describes here. I quote from Spinoza's Ethics: "Before proceeding, I would wish to explain, or rather to remind you, what we must understand by active and passive nature (*natura naturans* and *natura naturata*), for I think that from the past propositions we shall be agreed that by nature active we must understand that which is in itself and through itself is conceived, or such attributes of substance as express eternal and infinite essence...By nature passive I understand all that follows from the necessity of the nature of God..." (E1 Proposition XXIX, Note). That is, for Spinoza *natura naturans* is the creative force of the substance and *natura naturata* is the result, the produce, of this creative force. It is interesting here to refer to

the work of Chaui (1999), the prominent Brazilian philosopher and expert on Spinoza. Chaui (1999:56-57) shows an interesting insight concerning Spinoza's views on *natura naturans* and *natura naturata* which *mutati mutantis*, apply to Schelling also. Her insight is, more specifically, concerned with the connection between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata* and she connects Spinoza's understanding of these concepts to the revolution on optics that was happening at the time of Spinoza. Spinoza was certainly familiar with the revolution in optics since he was a lens grinder and microscope maker by profession, and since he also conduct experiments in optics himself, as we come to know through his private correspondence and as we also can assert through the lost and found Treatise on the Rainbow which has been attributed to Spinoza and which is the only known work by Spinoza written in Dutch. Chaui (1999:56-57) argues that in Latin there is difference between *Lux*, i.e. the source of the light, and *Lumen*, i.e. light which illuminates all that which is around the source of light. Moreover, light, as opposed to sound for instance, propagates itself uniformly and without loss. The difference between *Lux* and *Lumen* has been long forgotten by modern languages, however, it is most certain that Spinoza was familiar with both terms since he was fluent in Latin, and since he wrote all his writings in Latin (apart from the Treatise on the Rainbow). The point Chaui is trying to make is that just as in optics there is a difference between the source of light and the light itself, in the Universe, in Reality, in Nature, there is also a difference between creator and creation, process and produce, active and passive nature, and that this differentiation is not always as clear cut as it seems. In other words, the source of light illuminates itself and its light illuminates its surroundings uniformly, just as the substance, *Deus sive Natura*, manifests itself as *natura naturans*, i.e. active nature or creator or process, and *natura naturata*, i.e. passive nature or creation or produce. *Lux* and *Lumen*, *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*, or as Schelling would say, objectivity and

subjectivity, are interdependent. One cannot exist or occur without the other, they are like the poles of a magnet, without both the positive and the negative pole there is no magnet, without creator and creation there is no reality for Spinoza, without objective and subjective there is no absolute for Schelling.

iv. *The activity of nature results from the interplay of opposing forces*: that is, if all the forces at work in nature were in complete harmony, then there would be nothing to stop the process from coming to an end, an end in which nature is in absolute harmony and at rest. As such, it must be presumed that there are opposing forces at work within the whole of nature, so that the idea of becoming, the idea of change, the idea of evolving in degrees, remains a possibility for reality as a whole and for individual entities. Spinoza in his Ethics also conceives the same sort of idea of the activity in reality being interplay of opposing forces. For Spinoza everything in reality is in motion or at rest ad infinitum. The following passages corroborates this: "A body in motion or at rest must be determined for motion and rest by some other body, which, likewise was determined for motion or rest by some other body, and this by a third, and so on to infinity" (E2 P13 LIII). Even the continuity of the modes of the substance as individual entities as such rests on this idea of movement and rest. If the balance between motion and rest within these modes, these individual entities is broken, then these modes cease to be and become different modes. For instance, a molecule of water if the balance of forces at movement and at rest within this molecule is broken then the molecule collapses and it becomes two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen. The following passages corroborate this as it asserts that as long as the balance within the individual is maintained then the individual will remain. I quote: "If from a body or individual which is composed of several bodies certain ones are removed, and at the same time

the same number of bodies of the same nature succeed to their place, the individual will retain its nature as before without any change in its form" (E2 P13 L4). Presumably, for Spinoza and Schelling, if the balance of forces within our reality is ever broken then our reality would cease to exist as it is and it would collapse into being something else, something less complex and more primordial.

v. *The opposing forces of nature are themselves equal*: that is, Schelling maintains that there is no reason for assuming that these opposing forces in nature are unequal. Esposito (1977:85) takes issue here with Schelling's views and maintains that *"there certainly is a reason for thinking them unequal; if they were equal, then nature would either be in a state of perpetual equilibrium or would already have been annihilated, but this appears contrary to the idea of nature as a dynamic process"*. I actually disagree with Esposito on this issue as I think that Schelling had reasons for thinking that the opposing forces of nature are equal. If those forces were unequal, then one force would eventually emerge as the most powerful, a fact which would render the other forces ineffective or defunct, and as such the development in nature would come to a halt. I think Schelling would probably reply here to Esposito that to say that these forces are equal, does not mean to say that they are well-balanced, or in perpetual harmony; rather it is to say that these opposing forces possess the same capabilities, they are equal insofar as their powers are concerned. Let me explain this with an example. Bearing in mind that Schelling understands nature to be a self-created, self-explanatory, and self-contained system, then if there are opposing forces within this system, it is reasonable to think that if one particular force A acts upon a particular force B, and if this particular force A uses 10 units of its power to act upon force B, then it is reasonable to say that B, possessing the same resources of A since they are

equal, will try to counterbalance A's actions through the use of 10 units also. This could be described as action and reaction. Forces will constantly try to dominate each other, but in doing so, they will be constantly counterbalanced. This is what generates the dynamics, the changes in nature. To my knowledge Spinoza never explicitly argued that the opposing forces in nature, which he refers to as motion and rest, required to be either equal or unequal. We can infer, however, from his writings that if he was asked about this he would advocate that those opposing forces require to be equal in power because the dynamics of reality necessitate such a balance of equal forces. A universe in which these forces are unequal is a universe in which everything would either end up at rest and thus it would not display the dynamism we experience, or it would end up as a universe in which everything is in movement and thus so chaotic to that no individual modes could ever arise, or if modes could arise it would be so briefly that no proper progress or development could ever come out of it. It is worthy quoting here what various commentators have said about this aspect of Schelling's philosophy, and which corroborate the point I made against Esposito's views on this issue. Beiser (2002:531) explains the relation between the two forces well when he says that *"each power is necessary to understand the creation of something determinate, a definite product. Without the infinitely expanding tendency, there would be nothing at all, and so nothing to restrict, because it is the condition of any existence; and without the infinitely contractive tendency, there will be nothing 'determinate', because negation is the condition of all determination. The product of nature must be seen then, as the result of both these forces.* And Žižek (1997:18) notes that *"what we experience as 'reality' is constituted and maintains itself through a balance between the two antagonist forces, with the ever-present danger that one of the two sides will 'crack', run out of control, and thus destroy the 'impression of reality'. Is not this speculation confirmed by the*

premise of contemporary cosmology according to which the 'reality' of our universe hangs in the balance, that is, hinges on the fragile tension between expansion and gravitation? If the expansion were just a little stronger, the universe would 'explode', dissipate, no firm, stable objects would form; if, on the contrary, gravitation were a little bit stronger, it would long ago have 'collapsed', fallen in...". And Ameriks (2000a:532) says that *"true to his dynamics principles Schelling insists that the opposition between forces is not static but active. If nature is absolute productivity, then its opposed forces must be in a constant struggle with one another, where one constantly tries to increase at the expense of the other. If they were to come into a stable or lasting equilibrium, then the activity of nature itself would cease, and everything would freeze into a static product".* [28]

vi. *Nature is structured hierarchically and its activity is in accordance with laws of evolution*: this is a very interesting proposition posed by Schelling. That is, Schelling asserts that in nature, the most simple processes and products have a tendency to combine themselves in more complex processes and products. This activity of combining leads to a hierarchical structure from the simplest to the most complex within nature, and it also leads to evolution through the continuous combining of different processes and products. Schelling also maintains that this is an open-ended principle, that is, the activity of combining has no *telos*, because if it did, then nature would be pursuing a particular route, and nature would eventually achieve its goals, which would mean, that nature is not dynamic anymore but in absolute rest. Spinoza's ontology also asserts

[28] NB. This aspect reminds me here of the modern reading of Fichte's Absolute I, where the individual-I is in an endless engagement with the not-I, and where one always tries to overcome the other with no success. If there is no balance of forces between the individual-I and the not-I, then the individual-I would be overcome by the not-I and hence it would be unable to reflect on

that there are simple bodies (corpora simplicissima) and compound bodies (corpora composita) and that the latter occur when the former combine themselves, I quote: "When a number of bodies of the same or different size are driven so together that they remain united one with the other, or if they are moved with the same or different rapidity so that they communicate their motions one to another in a certain ratio, those bodies are called reciprocally united bodies (corpora invicem unita) and we say that they all form one body or individual, which is distinguished from the rest by this union of the bodies" (E2 A2). In Spinoza's conception of reality there is no *telos* either, there is no ultimate goal, modes are driven together by the amount of movement and rest within themselves and around themselves, e.g. simple modes turn into compound modes, and compound modes into more complex compound modes, and they remain so until such a time when the balance is broken. Schelling's interesting insight is that he applies this proposition to processes and products, whilst Spinoza seems to apply the proposition to products only. As such, Schelling's views here are a preview of some modern views on cosmology, such as the views advocated by Ilya Prigogine, the nobel prize winner, who argued that evolution as manifested in processes and products becomes increasingly complex through the combining of simpler or less complex processes and products; moreover, these evolutionary qualitative jumps in processes and products seem to happen at random and in an unexplainable manner.[29]

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the not-I, and if the individual-I could overcome the not-I then it would be in some sort of permanent reflective state without the possibility of engaging with reality.

[29] NB. It is worth mentioning here for instance the works of Ilya Prigogine, the nobel prize winner in chemistry, who in describing reality advocates that development is not linear it jumps, and processes and entities have a tendency to become increasingly complex. cf. Ilya Prigogine, From Being to Becoming, San Francisco: Freeman, 1980; and End of Certainty, New York: The Free Press, 1997.

As I demonstrated above I understand that all these principles and such a view of nature lead Schelling's system to mirror some of Spinoza's views in many respects. But one can find even further evidence that Schelling was indebted to some of Spinoza's views in other of his works. It is appropriate to refer here to a work of Schelling entitled Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie, which was published in 1801, and which is not available in English, where Schelling presents another exposition of his *Naturphilosophie* project and this time he does so in the manner of Spinoza on the Ethics, as noted by Esposito (1977:93-97) and by Lawrence (2003:176). In other words, Schelling presents his *Naturphilosophie* in a geometrical manner, through the use of axioms and propositions, such as the ones listed below where he characterises the absolute. The reader will note that the terminology is very typical of the German Idealism period, the way in which the terminology is presented, however, is very reminiscent of Spinoza's style, particularly of his geometrical method. I quote some of the propositions in order to demonstrate this point:

(10) *The absolute identity is absolutely infinite.*

(13) *Nothing comes into being in itself.*

(21) *The absolute identity cannot know itself infinitely without infinitely positing itself as subject and object.* And Schelling judges this to be a self-evident proposition.

(32) *The absolute identity is not the cause of the Universe, but is the Universe itself.*

(35) *Nothing individual has the ground of its existence in itself.*

(36) *Every individual being is determined through another individual being.*

(38) *Every individual being is a definite form of the being of the absolute identity, though not its being itself, which is only in the totality.* This needs explaining. What Schelling is asserting here

is that there is only a formal distinction between finites and the infinite. The finites are *disturbances* or *modifications* in the infinite.

(41) *Every individual is a totality in relation to itself.*

(44) *All potencies are absolutely simultaneous.*

It is interesting to note here that Hodgson (1995:226) informs us in a footnote that Hegel, in his Lectures on Philosophy of Religion, also referred to this work, the Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophy, of Schelling as connected to Spinoza's Ethics. I quote Hodgson:

> Hegel is referring here to Spinoza's *Ethics* (1677) and to Schelling's "Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophy", *Zeitschrift fur speculative Physik...*

Hodgson's footnote refers to a passage of Hegel's Lectures on Philosophy of Religion where Hegel (1995:226) writes that Spinoza's substance and Schelling's absolute play the same function within these philosophers' philosophical systems. That is, Spinoza's substance and Schelling's absolute are the first principle of their respective philosophical systems, are point of origin of all reality, are the point where subjective and objective are united, are thinking and being. I quote:

> This way of comprehending the matter is to this extent more *subjective* in character, and what presents itself as the truth of this finitude is the idea that has being in itself - the Spinozistic *substance* or the *absolute*, as Schelling conceived it. It is shown from natural things as well as from the spiritual world that they are finite, that the truth is the disappearance of their limitation in the absolute

substance, and that the latter is the absolute identity of both - of the subjective and objective, of thinking and being.

Let us recapitulate what has been established thus far concerning the fact that Schelling subscribed to some aspects of Spinozism. Firstly, there is the similarity of writing style, as in the Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie where Schelling makes use of Spinoza famous geometrical method and where if were not for the classical terminology coined by German idealism, such as the use of terms such as absolute and identity, someone could be forgiven for confusing some of Schelling's propositions there with some of Spinoza's propositions in the Ethics, as I mentioned above. Secondly, there is the use by Schelling of some of Spinoza's classical concepts, such as *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*, and Schelling does so without changing the meaning of those concepts, as I asserted previously. That is for Schelling, as for Spinoza, *natura naturans* is nature as a producing force, as a process, and *natura naturata* is nature as product. And lastly there is the issue of the role played by Spinoza's substance and Schelling's absolute in their philosophical systems, which was noted by Hegel and which I have referred to in the previous paragraph; based on this there is the issue of the similarities between the whole of their metaphysical systems themselves. Let us look into these last issues in more detail now.

As I noted in the previous paragraph Hegel understood that Spinoza's substance and Schelling's absolute played the same role within their philosophical systems. For Spinoza the concept of substance represents the first and simple principle upon which his whole philosophical system is based. Moreover, the concept of substance, for Spinoza, represents the basis of all reality, the concept of substance is that which maintains all reality together, is that

which explains the nature of reality, and is that which explains the nature of things in reality. As I previously mentioned, for Spinoza, metaphysics is the science of 'Being', the study of the nature of reality (and note that this is the original sense ascribed to metaphysics by the ancient philosophers) and this puts him in direct opposition to Scholastics, Wolffians and all those who, prior to Kant, changed the study of metaphysics to the study of a reality that seemed to run parallel to ours, a reality of souls, immortality and a transcendent God. Spinoza spends much of part I of his Ethics arguing and establishing that the substance is the first principle which serves as the basis to his whole metaphysical system. The following definitions and propositions corroborate this:

> 1D1 - I understand that to be Cause of Itself (causa sui) whose essence involves existence and whose nature cannot be conceived unless existing.
>
> 1D3 - I understand Substance (substancia) to be that which is itself and is conceived through itself: I mean that, the conception of which does not depend on the conception of another thing.
>
> 1P14 - Except God [which he later identifies with nature, the whole of nature, the *natura naturans* and the *natura naturata*] no substance can be granted or conceived. [my brackets]

Schelling's concept of the absolute plays exactly the same role within his philosophical system. The concept of the Absolute, is for Schelling, the simple and basic concept of all philosophy, it

explains objectivity and subjectivity, it explains the relation between objectivity and subjectivity and between subjectivity and objectivity; in short, it explains reality and the nature and relations of things within reality. The following passage corroborates this. I quote Schelling (1988:46):

> The absolute...is necessarily *pure identity*; it is just absoluteness and nothing else and absoluteness *per se* is equal to itself; but it does indeed also belong to the idea that, this pure identity, independent of subjectivity and objectivity, *as this*, and without ceasing to be so in one or the other, is itself matter and form, subject and object...That equal and pure absoluteness, that equal identity in the subjective and objective, was what we have defined in this characterisation as the identity, *the equal essence* of subjective and objective...

Thus, Spinoza's concept of substance and Schelling's concept of absolute play the same role within their respective philosophical system, that is, these concepts ascribe systematicity to their thought as these concepts serve as the first, basic and simple principle out of which their systems are deduced.

And connected to the issue of the role played by the concepts of substance and absolute within Spinoza's and Schelling's system is the issue of the whole conception of their philosophical systems. Let us look into this now.

After establishing that there is only one substance, that everything is a modification of the substance, that the substance possess an infinite number of attributes, of which human beings have access to two, namely thought and extension, Spinoza identifies God as a substance. Crucial is the fact that in some passages of his writings Spinoza makes the move from God

simpliciter to God or nature or *Deus sive natura*; and he explicitly does so, for instance, in the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus (Introduction p. 8 of Elwes' translation), in the Short Treatise (ST part 2 App II), and in the Ethics (E1 P14; 19; and E4 Preface). The important point here is that this move is made a number of times. One of the possible reasons why Spinoza did not say *Deus sive natura* or just *natura* all the time in his writings is that, as the reader will recall, this is a very controversial claim for the 17th century philosopher. The first chapter of this thesis has dealt with many of the problems faced by Spinoza at the time and with the reception of his philosophical thought, so I shall not reproduce that material here. Crucial here, is the issue that it is a widely accepted proposition that Spinoza was defending some sort of pantheism since the implications of his thought is that everything is a mode of the substance, everything is a modification of nature; and that this reality we experience is the only possible reality, there is no other reality than the one we are part of, there is no point in talking about a parallel reality to ours as the existence of such reality is illogical within Spinoza's system given that the unique substance is absolutely infinite.

I quote an important passage of the Ethics here that corroborates much of what I have just asserted: God I understand to be a being absolutely infinite, that is, a substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence (EID6). Are not these the same sort of propositions Schelling is also putting forward in his project? Schelling does identify the absolute, his first principle, with nature and he does say that objectivity and subjectivity are features of the absolute, that there is an identity of objectivity and subjectivity within the absolute, that the objective is subjective and vice versa. That is, for Schelling everything is a feature of the absolute, which he deems to be nature, and as such this doctrine can be viewed as a sort of pantheism since the absolute is a term which is usually applied to God. I

believe that a way to correctly and philosophically understand this issue is to hold that both philosophers are arguing that everything is a modification of Being as both philosophers take metaphysics to be the science of Being, as did ancient philosophers. Thus, Being for Spinoza is that which he identifies with substance and for Schelling is that which he identifies with the absolute; and this is so because both philosophers try to explain the whole of reality, the nature of reality and the nature of things in reality.

Moreover, on this same issue of the similarities of their metaphysical systems as a whole, I argue that one could equate Schelling's objectivity with Spinoza's extension attribute of the substance since both concern the world as a physical system, and one could also equate Schelling's subjectivity with Spinoza's thought attribute of the substance since both are connected with rationality. Where they may differ here is that Schelling has never suggested that the absolute has any other kind of attribute other than objectivity and subjectivity, both of which he would certainly consider to be infinite since to place a limit to them would be arbitrary, whilst there is a debate between scholars of Spinoza whether Spinoza does say that the substance has an infinite number of infinite attributes of which human beings have access to only two, namely thought and extension - this is a view largely held by classical commentators - or whether Spinoza only meant that the substance has only two infinite attributes, namely thought and extension - this is a view held by some modern commentators. I tend to side with the former school of commentators as I find that the textual evidence supports their views, i.e. that the substance has an infinite number of infinite attributes and we, human beings, given our nature, can access only two, thought and extension. I quote the following definitions as support for this thesis: "An attribute I understand to be that which the intellect perceives as constituting the essence of a substance" (EID4) and as such we, human beings, given that we are corporeal and

rational beings can only access the thought and extension manifestation of the substance; and God I understand to be a being absolutely infinite, that is, a substance consisting of infinite attributes each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence (EID6), which clearly states that the substance has an infinite number of infinite attributes. If classical commentators are correct then Schelling and Spinoza may diverge on this issue, if more modern commentators are correct then they are in complete agreement. It is difficult here to establish with certainty one way or the other in Spinoza's case, as it is just as difficult to establish the reasons why Schelling did not contemplate the possibility of the absolute having further features other than objectivity and subjectivity, and as such I shall not pursue this point any further here.

To conclude this chapter. Following from what I have argued and demonstrated thus far, the reader will appreciate that there are a number of similarities between Schelling's views in his *Naturphilosophie* project and some of Spinoza's most well-known metaphysical views. As I stated above, there is the issue of the use by Schelling of the same concepts as used by Spinoza, such as *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*, and more importantly, Schelling makes use of these concepts in exactly the same way as Spinoza did and Schelling does not change the meaning of these concepts either. Then, there is the issue of Spinoza's substance and Schelling's absolute being identified with nature and playing the same role within their respective philosophical systems, that is, these concepts are equated with the first, basic and simple concept out of which their whole philosophical systems are derived. And lastly, there is the issue of the similarities between the whole of their philosophical systems, that is, within their systems, ideal and real, objective and subjective, thought and extension are united in a concept, are features of a concept (which is the substance in the case of Spinoza and the absolute in the case of Schelling). As such, Schelling's debt to some of Spinoza's view is plain.

CHAPTER 8: PANTHEISM AND GOD

SCHELLING AND SPINOZA: ARE THEY PANTHEISTS? ARE THEY ATHEISTS? ARE THEY DEFENDING HYLOZOISM?

Following on from what has been considered thus far I wish to deal with what I judge to be another striking similarity between Spinoza and the Schelling of the *Naturphilosophie* project, that is, both philosophers could be said to be what I call, 'sophisticated pantheists', and my definition for this term will be given below after I provide my characterisation of 'ordinary pantheism'. Strictly speaking, ordinary pantheism is the view that the world as a physical system is divine, that everything that exists is divine. Thus, an ordinary pantheist denies the commonly held view by theism and deism that there is a clear-cut distinction between a transcendent God who wills creation and creation itself because the ordinary pantheist understands that the universe is all that there is, and that the universe itself, as a physical system, is divine. This is in direct contrast with mainstream religions, such as Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, since these assert that there is a clear separation between the creator and its creation and as such pantheism and the charge of atheism very often go hand in hand.

I argue that Spinoza was not an ordinary pantheist as many commentators hold, commentators such as Priest (1991:160) and Hampshire (1953:36), as I shall demonstrate in the following paragraphs. And I shall also argue in the following paragraphs that Schelling, at least the young Schelling of the *Naturphilosophie* project, was a sophisticated pantheist. It has been argued that later in his philosophical development, Schelling tried to reconcile this earlier

position with a form of theism as he started to see it problematic for freedom to subscribe to the doctrine of pantheism, even if this was a sophisticated form.[30]

It is my understanding that the view that Spinoza was an ordinary pantheist has probably arisen from a misinterpretation or misreading of Spinoza's terminology. Commentators have misunderstood Spinoza's assertions that i. there is only one substance, ii. God is a substance, and iii. God is nature. It is correct that Spinoza asserts that God is a substance and that God is nature, but this assertion does not mean that Spinoza is identifying God or nature solely with the Universe as a physical system. In fact, Spinoza maintains this in a letter 21 (epistle 73) to Henry Oldenburgh:

> Those who think that the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus rests on this, namely, that God and Nature (by which they mean a certain mass, or corporeal matter) are one and the same, are entirely mistaken.

Thus, Spinoza clearly says in this passage that he is not what I would call an ordinary pantheist, that is, he does not hold that his unique substance, or God or nature, is solely the universe as sheer matter, as mass, or to use the terminology I have been using thus far, as a tangible product.

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[30] NB: Both Spinoza and Schelling were criticised by their contemporaries for advocating pantheist doctrines because of the implications that this doctrine has for human freedom. Spinoza remained true to his views and never tried to re-write or re-formulate them to calm his critics; he remained true to the doctrine of human necessary freedom, or the idea that we are free only insofar as we stay true to, and understand, our human essence, and he also remained convinced that only the substance is absolutely free because it is self-creating, it is limited by any thing else. Schelling was also criticised by some of his contemporaries for subscribing to pantheism for the implications that it bears to human freedom. Schelling's essay Philosophische Untersuchungen uber das Wesen des menschlichen Freiheit of 1809 is an attempt to appease his critics, but it also represents a compromise by Schelling as he reformulates his project in order to

Spinoza understands that God or nature, as the universe, as reality, is more than sheer matter, sheer produce.

This statement of Spinoza, and my explanation of it, do not fit the common characterisation for ordinary pantheism, and as such I must press further and ask the question: Could Spinoza be what I would call a sophisticated pantheist? Could Spinoza have developed ordinary pantheism further? I think one ought to answer these questions in the affirmative here, and I shall demonstrate the reasons for this.

It is my understanding that Spinoza is a sophisticated pantheist because, as the reader will recall, he asserts that his substance, i.e. nature, manifests itself in two ways, namely, *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*. As I have noted in the previous section by *natura naturans* Spinoza means nature in its active manifestation or nature as a process, and by *natura naturata* Spinoza means nature in its passive manifestation or nature as product. With this distinction between nature as process and nature as product Spinoza is improving on the ordinary pantheist thesis that the universe is solely made up of matter and that it is divine. For Spinoza reality is a physical system that can be explained in terms of a process and of produce, of essence and physical system, because without one the other cannot be obtained. It is only if reality, if nature, is seen as process and as product that change and development can be accounted for. *Natura naturans* and *natura naturata* are inter-dependent, without the one there cannot be the other. They are, to borrow an example of Schelling, like the poles of a magnet. The very nature of reality is dependent on these two features, produce and process. If there is no process then there is no change in reality, and since there is change in reality, reality cannot be seen as a produce only, as a physical system only. Spinoza's insight here identifies a possible philosophical

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safeguard absolute human freedom and as such it represents a departure from true Spinozistic

problem with ordinary pantheism and this is that it regards reality as product only, and at the same time, Spinoza offers a possible solution to this same problem without giving up on the notion of pantheism, and this is to understand that reality encompass both process and product.

There seems to be a case for arguing that in the *Naturphilosophie* project Schelling seems to follow on Spinoza's notion of pantheism very closely. I understand that it is reasonable to say that Schelling appears to be advocating the same sort of 'sophisticated pantheism'. I believe this to be so for the following reasons. First, Schelling does identify his concept of the absolute, his highest principle, as being nature. Note that the concept of the absolute is usually used with relation to God, that is, God is the absolute. Philosophers such as Jacobi for instance would only regard God as the absolute, everything else being relative to God since everything has been created by the will of God. And just to remind the reader, Fichte himself, according to the classical reading of Schelling and Hegel, also held that the absolute, his absolute I, is God. For the attentive reader of the 18th century Schelling's assertion that the absolute is nature probably sounded extremely daring since it would be considered tantamount to pantheism. Thus, recapitulating, in the *Naturphilosophie* project, Schelling puts together the concept of the absolute which, as I said, is usually applied to God and asserts that this absolute is nature, and from this one can easily infer that Schelling is defending some sort of pantheistic doctrine. But the question here is: is he defending what I have called 'ordinary pantheism'? I have to answer this question in the negative. When Schelling asserts that the absolute is nature he does not mean nature as a lump of matter. To do so would have been to remain in the same track previously laid down by Newton, Kant, and Fichte, who considered nature as that which is objective only, and this is exactly what Schelling sought to avoid. For Schelling nature, the absolute, is that

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doctrines. cf. Esposito (1977:157-159), Copleston (1946:51) and White (1983:81-92).

which unites objectivity and subjectivity and as such it cannot be merely regarded as a lump of matter. Moreover, to consider nature as being a lump of matter, as a physical system only, would incur the problem of accounting for change in reality. As the reader will recall Schelling makes use of the concepts of *natura naturans* and *natura naturata* in his project to account for change in reality. Through the use of the same terms used by Spinoza previously, namely *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*, and through the use of these same terms with the same meaning previously ascribed to them by Spinoza, Schelling is able to avoid the problem of accounting for change in reality; reality involves both process and produce, it involves both *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*, like the poles of a magnet these two concepts are interlinked within the nature of reality. That is, nature manifests itself as both creator and creation, subjective and objective, process and produce. This is the same sort of metaphysical system advocated by Spinoza at the end of the 17th century, and which Schelling, a hundred years after Spinoza, tried to revive in his project. But does this make Schelling a sophisticated pantheist? I believe that there is a strong case for saying so. I believe that there is a strong case for saying so because he affirms that there is an absolute which is nature, and this is tantamount to pantheism as I have argued above, and because he makes use of Spinoza's notions of *natura naturans* and *natura naturata* in exactly the same way as Spinoza did, and this fits well within the definition I have given to sophisticated pantheism since it conceives of reality as a process and a produce.

I believe most of Schelling's commentators would agree with my assessment here of Schelling being a pantheist, even if a sophisticated pantheist, since this is a commonly held view with regards to Schelling's philosophy. I note, however, that despite the fact that there is a strong case for holding that Schelling was a pantheist, that Schelling could have disagreed with my and other commentators' assessment here. Schelling could reply that he never denies the existence of

a transcendent God who wills the world, but that he does indeed hold that reality, as nature, is absolute, is a self-contained and self-explanatory system. Let us pursue this possible reply by Schelling in further detail in the forthcoming paragraphs as I understand that it may prove to be very interesting within the history of Spinozism and within the history of German Idealism. In order for me to access Schelling's possible reply I must first demonstrate what Spinoza was trying to do in defending pantheism.

It is my understanding that one of the things Spinoza was trying to do in defending pantheism was to try to convert the 17th century orthodox philosopher, such as Descartes, to his side, to view pantheism as a logical possibility. It must be noted for the sake of my argument that the seventeenth century orthodox philosopher held that i. God and Nature are different and distinct entities, ii. that God and Nature are self-contained and self-explanatory systems, and iii. that God has necessary existence whilst Nature, insofar as it is the physical Universe, has contingent existence because it depends on the will of God for its existence. Spinoza's starting point for the conversion of the orthodox philosopher is the ontological argument as I shall demonstrate now.

The ontological argument for the existence of God has as its starting point the definition of 'God'. It attempts to prove that 'God exists' by examining the definition of 'what God is'. To put this in more modern philosophical terminology: the ontological argument maintains that the statement 'God exists' is an analytic statement rather than a synthetic statement because it understands that the concept of God encompasses the concept of existence, i.e. the concept of the predicated is contained within the concept of the subject; and the ontological argument also holds that the statement 'God exists' is also a priori, i.e. it is not dependent on evidence from experience, which would deem it a posteriori. Thus, the ontological argument is an a priori

argument, which aims to prove that the real existence of God is analytically true. It is also noteworthy here that there is no actual single argument, which alone deserves to be called "the ontological argument", rather the ontological argument refers to a cluster of arguments, which, as I have stated above, intend to prove the existence of God from the concept of God.

Spinoza's commitment to the ontological argument is clearly shown in the following passage of the Ethics, where Spinoza defines "God (Deus) [as] ... a substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which express eternal and infinite essence, necessarily exists", and Spinoza's proof is as follows: "If you deny it, conceive, if it be possible, that God (Deus) does not exist. Then (Axiom 7, i.e. the essence of that which can be conceived as not existing does not involve existence) his essence does not involve existence. But this (Proposition 7, i.e. Existence appertains to the nature of substance) is absurd. Therefore God (Deus) necessarily exists". (E I p11) The passages above clearly show that Spinoza is analysing the concept of 'God' and inferring from it that existence is part of that concept, and moreover, that this existence is necessary rather than contingent. So far this is a straightforward version of the ontological argument for the existence of God and as it stands it would not present a problem for the orthodox philosopher.

I, however, argue that Spinoza makes use of the ontological argument to convince the 17th century orthodox philosopher that God and the Universe are one and the same thing. The conversion of the 17th century orthodox philosopher is done in two distinct stages, as follows: i. Spinoza proves, by the use of his version of the ontological argument, that God exists and that his existence is necessary, and the orthodox philosopher has to agree with Spinoza because if he denies this much he jeopardises his own standing position; and then ii. Spinoza takes his

argument a step further and asserts that thought and extension are attributes of God, and this is Spinoza's *coup de grâce* against the orthodox philosopher's position.

Let us now see how the conversion is attempted in more detail. As I have stated above, the orthodox philosopher understands that God and Nature are two distinct, self-contained and self-explanatory entities, and that God has necessary existence whilst Nature, insofar as it is the physical Universe, has contingent existence because it depends on the will of God for its existence. Crucial here, and this is an important point concerning the conversion, is the fact that the orthodox philosopher tries to explain Nature, or events in the physical Universe, always in physical terms, that is, when the orthodox philosopher tries to explain Nature, he does so by presupposing that Nature is a self-explanatory system. In order to undermine the orthodox philosopher's position Spinoza spends much of his time in the first part of the Ethics, which is entitled "Concerning God", demonstrating through the use of axioms and propositions that the substance necessarily exists, and within this same context he asserts that God is a substance, and therefore it follows that God necessarily exists. And as I mentioned previously, up to this point the orthodox philosopher must agree with Spinoza because if he does not do so he is in danger of undermining his own position. It is at this point that Spinoza takes his argument further and where he attempts to undermine the orthodox philosopher's views. Spinoza develops his argument so to demonstrate that thought and extension are attributes of the substance, that is, thought and extension are attributes of God, and he does so within the context of the ontological argument. He asserts that since:

> all substance is necessarily infinite (E1P8)

And that

> Except God no substance can be granted or conceived; as God is a being absolutely infinite, to whom no attribute expressing essence of substance can be denied, and as he necessarily exists, if any other substance than God be given, it must be explained by means of some attribute of God, and thus two substances would exist possessing the same attribute, which is absurd [because proposition one states that "a substance is prior to its modifications" and proposition 5 states that "in the nature of things, two or more substances may not be granted having the same nature of things"], and so no other substance than God can be granted, and consequently not even be conceived... (E1P14) [my brackets]

In other words, since the substance necessarily exists and is infinite, and since God is a substance, God necessarily exists and is absolutely infinite. And note here that Spinoza does not say just 'infinite' but 'absolutely infinite', that is, the substance or God must encompass all forms of infinity. I understand that Spinoza makes use here of that understanding of the concept of God which asserts that God is absolutely infinite because otherwise it would lack in essence and if it lacked in essence it would not be perfect. Thus far the orthodox philosopher has to agree with Spinoza. But then Spinoza presents the critical part of his argument, that is, that thought and extension are attributes of the substance, are attributes of God, because to deny this would incur in the problem of the substance, or God, not being absolutely infinite, and thus lacking in perfection. It is here that we find the roots of Spinoza's pantheism, and it is here that the orthodox philosopher faces his challenge as he does not consider God to be extended; God, for

the orthodox philosopher is a special substance who created all other substances, but God is not considered to be extended, only creation is extended.

What Spinoza is ultimately doing is to say two things to the orthodox philosopher so that he can convert him to his side. Firstly, Spinoza is saying to the orthodox philosopher that if the concept of God is to encompass absolute infinity then the concept of God must include extension, and as such the concept of God collapses into the concept of nature as a physical, self-contained and self-explanatory system. I believe this to be Spinoza's stronger case against the orthodox philosopher's view since it relies on a careful analysis of the concept of God. If this, however, does not convince the orthodox philosopher then Spinoza can appeal to more practical issues. That is, Spinoza would ask the orthodox philosopher: if Nature is a self-contained system and if this system is self-explanatory, as you, the orthodox philosopher presumes, then why believe that this system depends on a different self-contained and self-explanatory system for its existence, i.e. God? If you, the orthodox philosopher, maintain that Nature is dependent on God, you are asserting that Nature cannot be self-explained, because the explanation for its existence is dependent on something else, namely, God. Spinoza's conclusion, following his version of the ontological argument, is that there is no transcendent God and that all those features and characterisations which the orthodox philosopher uses to describe a transcendent God to be understood as belonging to Spinoza's *Deus sive Natura*.

The following passages exemplify the point that Spinoza uses terminology which is usually applied to the God of the theist and deist to his substance. Spinoza describes his substance as: i. the highest kind of existence, i.e. "existence appertains to the nature of substance" (E I p7), ii. infinite, i.e. "all substance is necessarily infinite" (E I p8), iii. consists of infinite attributes, i.e. "the more reality or being a thing has, the more attributes it will have" (E I

p9), and iv. those attributes are an expression of eternity and infinity, i.e. "nothing is more clear than that each entity should be conceived under the effects of some attribute, and the more reality or being it has, the more attributes expressing necessity or eternity and infinity belong to it" (E I p10). The key for Spinoza in trying to convert the orthodox philosopher is to try to make him i. accept that an analysis of the concept of God yields that God encompasses extension if God is understood as being absolutely infinite; and ii. try to force the orthodox philosopher to give up on the idea that Nature's existence is contingent, the orthodox philosopher has to see Nature as having necessary existence because it is self-contained and self-explanatory; and iii. to accept that since God is extended and since nature is a self-explanatory and self-contained system that God and nature are one and the same thing.

I note that the orthodox philosopher does not have to accept Spinoza's conclusion that God and Nature are one and the same thing. In fact, the orthodox philosopher can reply to Spinoza that God does indeed possess all attributes including extension, because God is perfect, but that God is a special substance, i.e. God is a special substance that has created all other substances, and whose reality runs parallel to ours, and as such God being extended does not have any bearings on our reality. And the orthodox philosopher can also reply that the fact that Nature is a self-contained and self-explanatory system does not entail that Nature does not depend on God for its existence, as it might just be the case that God, the special substance, created and has preserved Nature as a self-contained and self-explanatory system. In spite of these possible replies by the orthodox philosopher, I understand, Spinoza is able to cast some doubt on the thesis that God and Nature are independent entities, that is, there just may be a possibility that God and Nature are one and the same thing, and this may just be sufficient to convert some orthodox philosophers to Spinoza's side.

If we disregard the fact that Schelling is commonly seen by commentators as being a pantheist and accept his possible reply then it is conceivable that Schelling is putting forward in the project a system which is heavily based on some of Spinoza's doctrines as I have demonstrated in the first subsection of this chapter, but a system which does not give up on the idea of a transcendent God. In other words, it may just be the case that Schelling agrees with Spinoza only insofar as Spinoza's characterisation of our reality is concerned; that is to say that Schelling agrees with Spinoza's characterisation of reality as being nature as a whole, as encompassing objectivity and subjectivity, as a nature that manifests itself as *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*. But this is as far as Schelling will go with Spinoza if his possible reply is correct as it appears that Schelling also takes the orthodox philosopher's side by disagreeing with Spinoza that God is nature by holding on to the idea of a transcendent God who has willed the existence of our self-contained and self-explanatory reality, or nature as a whole. It is interesting to note here the following passage from Lovejoy (1965:317) which seems to corroborate what I have just stated, and as such it goes against the commonly held view that Schelling was defending a straight form of pantheism in the project. Lovejoy (1965:317) writes:

> In much of his philosophizing between 1800 and 1812, it is true, he (Schelling) has still two Gods and therefore two religions - the religion of a time-transcending and eternally complete Absolute.... - and the religion of a struggling, temporally limited, gradually self-realizing World Spirit or Life-Force.

If Lovejoy is correct in his assessment of Schelling's project then Schelling has to face up to a major problem in his system, that is the problem that his system ends up with two absolutes, one

being God, the other Nature. God being the absolute which created another absolute, i.e. nature, since Schelling ascribes nature with the role of absolute within his system. In other words, nature as an absolute within Schelling's system ends up as being dependent on God, which is the other absolute. The problem here is that the concept of an absolute requires that it should not bear a relation to anything outside of it, if it does then it is not absolute but relative. And this is exactly what would happen to Schelling's systematic paradigm if we take account of his possible reply because nature as the absolute principle in his system is absolute only in name since it is dependent on God, who becomes the 'real' absolute principle, for its existence. It comes to mind that Jacobi would certainly level this objection against Schelling, just as he had done against Fichte years earlier. Certainly, what has been argued above only has relevance if Lovejoy's remarks are correct and if Schelling's conceivable reply is possible. I note, however, that this is not the case as there is no textual evidence within the texts of the project that corroborates either Lovejoy's or Schelling's conceivable reply and as such it must be presumed that Schelling was indeed defending pantheism in the project as it is widely accepted by commentators. In fact the textual evidence supports the view that he was a pantheist and that Schelling was aware that he could not hold on to the thesis that the absolute is nature and that the God of the theist or deist created this absolute. In the following passage of the Ideas where Schelling is about to start his exposition of the identity of ideal and real within the absolute, he comments on the impossibility of two absolutes. I quote Schelling (1988:46):

> In the whole of the following exposition we presuppose this acknowledgement of the indifference between absolute-ideal and absolute-real, which itself is an absolute, and we must assure everybody that, if he conceives or requires yet

> another absolute besides that, not only can we not help him to any knowledge of it, but also in our own knowledge of the absolute could not possibly become intelligible to him.

That said here, I must reject this possible reply of Schelling as having any grounds to stand on and also reject Lovejoy's reading of Schelling philosophy.

A further point that can be investigated in this subsection is the issue of atheism. It is noteworthy here that at the time when Spinoza and Schelling where writing, the 17th, 18th and 19th century, pantheism was generally equated with atheism. Both of these -isms went hand in hand. This is so because, as I mentioned in the beginning of this subsection, the pantheist disregarded the sharp separation between creator and creation; for the pantheist there is only a reality which we are part of, a reality which is itself divine. This pantheistic notion of a divine world puts the pantheist in direct opposition with theists and deists, who would regard it as a form of atheism, since it denies the existence of a transcendent God who wills the world. The charge of atheism against Spinoza is well known and I have dealt with this issue in the first chapter of this thesis within the context of the reception of Spinoza's doctrines in the Netherlands and Germany, so I shall not reproduce that material here. Despite the fact that Schelling was never formally charged as an atheist during the period of the project, I understand that he can be charged as such because he is defending a form of pantheism and pantheism in those days was still regarded as a synonym for atheism because it is a corruption of the common theistic or deistic understanding of the concept of God. I can only presume that Schelling was not charged as an atheist at the time possibly because he does not directly negate the existence of a transcendent God in the project, and because soon after writing the works of the project he does

refer to this issue in the works that followed, works in which he tried to solve the possible inconsistency between the project and theism or deism (cf. footnote 30).

Given my argument thus far in this subsection that Spinoza and the early Schelling are what I call sophisticated pantheists, there is a related point that could be explored here since it bears a correlation with the issue of pantheism. This is the issue of hylozoism.

The issue of hylozoism, i.e. the doctrine that holds that matter has life, comes to mind with respect to Spinoza's and Schelling's doctrines because pantheism sometimes could be linked or developed into hylozoism. Let us first look at Spinoza's views in order for us to assess if Spinoza could have held the doctrine of hylozoism in his writings. By doing some research on Spinoza's commentators it becomes clear that hylozoism is certainly a view that was held in the former Soviet Union with respect to Spinoza's doctrines. Kline (1952:26), a commentator on Spinoza, in particular, notes that Marxist philosophers regard the relation between consciousness and being, that is, the relation between thought and extension as a fundamental problem for philosophy and that Spinoza's popularity in the former Soviet Union lies on what was considered by Marxist philosophers as a materialistic solution to this problem, namely, hylozoism. It is certainly true that Spinoza's monism solves the problem posed by dualism, by proposing a monism in which thought and extension are mere aspects of the one substance. I, however, argue that this reading of Spinozism by Marxist philosophers is a mistaken one as it relies on a misreading of Spinoza's true philosophical views. It is mistaken because there is not a single passage in Spinoza's writings in which he explicitly suggests or argues in favour of hylozoism or that matter has life; there is simply no textual evidence that supports this reading. And moreover, I understand that these Marxist philosophers are just placing the thought attribute under the extension attribute of the substance. That is to say, that they are emphasising the

extension attribute to the detriment of the thought attribute, and it is my understanding that Spinoza would reject this reading of his doctrines because he explicitly says that the attributes of the substance cannot be reduced to one another so that, for instance, the thought attribute would fall under the extension attribute, and vice versa. Spinoza argued that the attributes are conceived through themselves and they are aspects that represent the essence of the substance and as such they cannot be reduced into one another. The following quotes are enlightening here:

> Each attribute of the substance must be conceived through itself. An attribute is that which the intellect perceives of a substance as constituting its essence therefore it must be conceived through itself. Hence it appears that, although two attributes are conceived really apart from each other, that is, one is conceived without the aid of the other, we cannot thence conclude that they form entities of two different substances. For it follows from the nature of the substance that each of its attributes can be conceived through itself: since all the attributes it ever had were in it at the same time, nor could one of them be produced from another, but each of them expresses the reality of being of the substance. (E1P10)

And

> ...the Mind and the Body are one and the same Individual, which is conceived now under the attribute Thought, now under the attribute of Extension. (E3P21)

Therefore, the doctrine of hylozoism is not true of Spinozism and those Marxist philosophers were mistaken in portraying Spinoza's system as defending such doctrine.[31] Given that Schelling's project mirrors so closely Spinoza's metaphysical system I decided to investigate if any of Schelling's commentators held or advocated that Schelling is defending hylozoism. My research here proved to be fruitless as none of Schelling's commentators seem to have ever overtly advocated or even suggested that Schelling's project advocates hylozoism. Nevertheless, it is still important here to enquire if Schelling's project could have advocated hylozoism since his project mirrors that of Spinoza and it has been argued by some commentators of Spinoza that Spinoza defended hylozoism. As such, I ask here: is the doctrine of hylozoism true of Schelling's project? I think the answer to this question ought to be no. Schelling, as I have demonstrated in the previous subsection, defended, as did Spinoza, the view that the ideal or subjectivity is real or objective and vice versa, and that both are united in an absolute principle which he deems to be nature, the whole of nature, nature as process and as product. The notion of identity between real and ideal is crucial here, one cannot be reduced to the other, one cannot

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[31] NB. Schelling's third phase, where he advocates that reality requires a ground, which he advocates to be the Real, proved to be quite appealing to Marxist philosophers, for the obvious reason that it grounds reality in 'matter'. This is a point noted by Jürgen Habbermas in his paper "Dialectical Idealism in Transition to Materialism: Schelling's Idea of a Contraction of God and its Consequences for the Philosophy of History", in The New Schelling, ed. Norman, J., and Welchman, A., London and New York: Continuum, 2004. However, by the time Schelling reached his fourth phase, where he develops his Philosophy of Mythology and Philosophy of Revelation, the Marxists did not see Schelling's philosophy with good eyes - these were not topics Marxists were fond of or have interest in. Alberto Toscano, in his paper "Philosophy and the Experience of Construction", in The New Schelling provides a quite detailed account of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels disdainful attitude towards Schelling's fourth phase. This demonstrates quite clearly Schelling's erratic philosophical development, and how his different phases appealed and repulsed different schools of thought, and perhaps this justifies his reputation for being fickle. It is interesting to quote the following quote from Marx (1975:349-350), who sarcastically notes that: *"To the French romantics and mystics he [Schelling] cries: 'I, the union of philosophy and theology', to the French materialists: 'I, the union of flesh and idea', to the French sceptics: 'I, the destroyer of dogmatism', in a word, 'I...Schelling'.*

be brought under the other, they are rather aspects of the absolute, they are different facets of the absolute. As such Schelling could never have defended hylozoism since this would contradict his own doctrine that ideal is real and vice versa. To defend hylozoism would imply that the ideal comes under the real, it would imply that subjectivity comes under objectivity, and this implies a top bottom relation rather than a relation of equals as it is advocated in the project. Should Schelling have subscribed to hylozoism then his project would have to de described in a different light, that is, instead of the commonly understood:

i. objectivity and subjectivity are irreducible aspects of the absolute;

We would have the hylozoistic reading:

ii. objectivity is an irreducible aspect of the absolute and subjectivity is an aspect of objectivity

It is widely agreed by Schelling's commentators that i. is correct and as such these commentators would agree that ii. was never argued by Schelling.

The view held by both Spinoza and Schelling that ideal and real, that thought and extension, that subjectivity and objectivity, are irreducible aspects of the absolute, also cuts against, *mutatis mutandis*, any sort of strong idealist reading of these philosophers. Reading Spinoza as an idealist was a fashionable trend during the late 19th century (cf. for instance "The Idealism of Spinoza" by Murray (1896)). Reading Schelling as a pure idealist is perhaps also a deviation from the true views of this philosopher because of his holding of the thesis that ideal is real and vice versa. I understand that both Spinoza and Schelling are better described as

defending idealism-realism or realism-idealism, as one aspect does not take precedence over the other. It is interesting to quote here the following passage from Richards (2002:201) where he comments on this aspect of Schelling's philosophy, an aspect which is present in the philosophy of some of Schelling's Romantic contemporaries. I quote:

> Romantic philosophers, scientists, and poets - given the idealistic-realistic metaphysics that grounded their conceptions - found in nature the self's other kingdom. Novalis, for instance, after having read Schelling's *Ideen* began a novel - *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais* (The Novices of Sais) - in which the young quested to remove the veil of nature and to become one with her. He dramatically captured Schelling's abstractions with distinction: "One succeeded - he lifted the veil of the Goddess of Sais - But what saw he? He saw - wonder of wonders - he saw himself". Nature and the self were doubles, each welling up for a common source. That common source was not a personal God who might be lurking in the dark, ready to condemn any breach of moral convention - and with the Romantics, that would have taken a truly divine effort - or to unveil all to be a conjuror's trick, a bit of thing-in-itself here and an arbitrary fiat there. Rather the laws of morality and the laws of nature arose from the self; they were our laws freely imposed and, at the same time, the laws of that greater reality which we were all a part. That reality simultaneously was both creator - natura naturans - and the created - natura naturata. Its creations, whether of natural beings or literary life, did not drop from the heavens as the intelligible commands of a hidden divinity; rather they grew as arabesques of wilful reason and archetypal structures.

To conclude this subsection. It is my understanding that Spinoza could not be classified as an ordinary pantheist because, as I demonstrated above, he develops ordinary pantheism further by ascribing to it the notions of process and product, the notions of *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*, and as such he could be characterised as a sophisticated pantheist. I have also demonstrated that Schelling falls within this same characterisation of being a sophisticated pantheist for exactly the same reason. Also, the issue of hylozoism has been briefly treated here in connection with Spinoza's and Schelling's doctrines and I have rejected the claim that either philosopher could have subscribed to this doctrine because both, Spinoza and Schelling, advocate the identity of ideal and real and to subscribe to hylozoism would imply that the ideal is a feature of the real, that is, that the ideal comes under the real. Finally, I have proposed that both Spinoza and Schelling may be better described as defending idealism-realism or realism-idealism rather than as pure idealists or realists. Thus far in this section I have dealt a great deal with issues in Schelling's and Spinoza's metaphysics. I now wish to turn my attention to the ethical implications of subscribing to these metaphysical views, and as such I shall now turn to the field of Deep Ecology. I turn my attention to Deep Ecology because theorists in this area have sought in some of Spinoza's metaphysical views support for their own views, and since Schelling's metaphysical system is a reflection of Spinoza's, I understand that it is appropriate here to investigate if Schelling's system can provide the same level of support, or even a better level of support, to Deep Ecologists.

CHAPTER 9: DEEP ECOLOGY

DEEP ECOLOGY: SPINOZA AND SCHELLING

In this chapter I wish to investigate the possible support that Spinoza's views and Schelling views may provide to the field of Deep Ecology. Theorists in this area have sought, in varying degrees, in some of Spinoza's thesis support for their own views on Deep Ecology. I understand that since Schelling's is largely indebted to some of Spinoza's views that his system may also be able to provide Deep Ecologists with the same level of support that they seek in Spinoza. Thus far, however, Deep Ecologists seem to have largely ignored Schelling's system; this is so perhaps because Schelling's philosophy became unfashionable and fell from memory until its recent revival; or perhaps because they prefer to seek support in a better known philosopher, such as Spinoza; or perhaps because they prefer to go direct to the source, Spinoza himself. In this section I shall provide the reader with a brief characterisation of Deep Ecology, and this requires a contrast with Environmental Ethics. Then I shall investigate if and how can some of Spinoza's views and of Schelling's views provide support for this new philosophical field. I shall then conclude this section.

Deep ecology and Environmental Ethics are two fast growing and prominent areas of modern philosophical thinking. Perhaps more so due to the nature of the current state of affairs of our planet, a state of affairs never experienced in the history of our planet. Humanity has spread itself all over the planet and has interfered greatly with the environment around through the exploitation of natural resources, pollution of the earth, air and water, and through the required changes for turning environments into suitable milieus for human use as dwellings,

agricultural land, sources of energy and so on and so forth. The outcome of this extreme interference with our environment has led the scientific community to raise the alarm that the rich biodiversity of our planet is at risk, that there can be some climate and environmental changes that may lead to serious consequences to human life, and that the exploitation of natural resources at the current levels is unsustainable as it will lead to a complete depletion of resources; I believe a recent example of this is the problem that Europe currently faces with its fishing grounds in the North Sea, Atlantic and Mediterranean Sea, or the example of heat wave that hit France in 2003 and which led to the death of fifteen thousand people.

In the face of these challenges some philosophers have started to question the nature of human interaction with the environment as it currently stands. Some have advocated that an Environmental Ethic is required, that is, a moral theory to guide human behaviour, about the rights and wrongs in human dealing with the environment. Others were not satisfied with this because they understand that Environmental Ethics, as a moral theory, remains too anthropocentric because it is only normative and does not inspire a change in the way people perceive the world around them, it only seeks to guide human action. These theorists who are not satisfied with Environmental Ethics have advocated in favour of Deep Ecology, that is, they have defended that a change of 'perspective' and attitude is required, and not merely a widening of the moral circle. It is worth quoting a passage from Fox (1984:204), a deep ecologist, who explains this well in his paper "On Guiding Stars for Deep Ecology":

> In seeking to change the way in which we experience the world (i.e. our state of being), deep ecologists place their *primary* emphasis upon changing our 'underlying perception of the way things are'...rather than upon what we might

> term the 'conceptual fix' approach of 'bigger and better' ethics (in the sense of arguments that ultimately issue in particular codes of conduct...

And to the definition of Deep Ecology provided by Kohac (1997:159) in his "Varieties of Ecological Experience":

> [Deep Ecology] sees the root of our environmental problem in our own conception of the place of humans in nature.

The divide between Environmental Ethics and Deep Ecology is sometimes very tenuous and there is a debate as to whether Deep Ecology is, or would be, effectively practical since it does not primarily seek to be normative but to change our perception of reality. I believe that the charge of impracticality against Deep Ecology here has echoes of the same charge when applied to Virtue Ethics. That is, those who oppose Virtue Ethics often say that Virtue Ethics does not provide clear guidelines for action because when the Virtue Ethicist is asked "What shall I do in this particular situation?" the seeker of guidance is faced with the reply "Do whatever the virtuous agent would do". The same could be said of Deep Ecology, that is, when asked "What shall I do in this particular situation?" The seeker of guidance faces the reply "You must change your perspective on the world". The foes of Deep Ecology would say that this is easier said than done and that the Deep Ecologist is being vacuous. That said, Virtue Ethics and Deep Ecology have many defenders who understand that seeking to develop one's virtues and one's character, in the case of Virtue Ethics, and seeking to change one's perception of the world through a change in both the way human beings see themselves in the world and in the way human beings see the

world, in the case of Deep Ecology, will ultimately provide the agent with some sort of awareness, perhaps I would dare to say here *phronesis*, of what ought to be done in a situation. Interesting to note here is that Fox has tried to develop his particular branch of Deep Ecology by linking it to Virtue Ethics, so there appears to be some sort of affinity between these two theories which has been noticed by some commentators, but this is not an approach to which most Deep Ecologists subscribe to by any means. I do not wish to add much more to the debate between Environmental Ethics and Deep Ecology here since this is not particularly pertinent to this thesis. I merely wished to point out that there is a distinction between Environmental Ethics and Deep Ecology at the outset of this subsection since this is an issue that may be confusing to those outside the field.

Also before progressing I find it important here to provide the original principles of Deep Ecology as set by Devall and Sessions (1985:70) in their paper entitled "Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered", and it is noteworthy here that Sessions is a Deep Ecologist and Spinoza scholar. These principles have become influential in the related literature and have been widely reprinted and their relevance for this thesis will become evident below when I discuss Deep Ecologists' reliance on some of Spinoza's thesis in more detail. These principles are:

1. The well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth have value in themselves. These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes.
2. The richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves.

3. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs.

4. The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of non-human life requires such decrease.

5. Present human interference with the non-human world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening.

6. Policies must therefore be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures, the resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present.

7. The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to an increasing higher standard of living. There will be a profound difference between big and great.

8. Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to try to implement the necessary changes.

Now that I have provided a brief characterisation of Deep Ecology I shall investigate if and how some of Spinoza's and Schelling's views may provide support for Deep Ecology. Deep Ecologists, such as the prominent Naess (1977, 1978, 1981), Mathews (1988, 1991), Jonge (2004), Fox (1990), and Devall and Sessions (1985) have sought in some of Spinoza's views support for their own views on Deep Ecology. By no means do they all agree on how to go about developing the field and as such these theorists have developed their own particular views on Deep Ecology by privileging different aspects of Spinozism. It is, however, beyond the scope of this thesis to provide a detailed account of their views and as such I shall merely concentrate

on those particular aspects of their views that are pertinent to Spinozism and to this thesis. This said, it does not take much effort and research to note that there are some particular aspects of their views that do cut across the board, and which are subscribed in different degrees by these theorists. These aspects are:

i. intrinsic value, which could be defined as the view that every thing has a value in itself and this value is not dependent on their usefulness to human beings;

ii. biocentric egalitarianism, which could be defined as the view that all entities, whether a cell, an entity, or an ecosystem such as the Amazon Basin or the planet Earth, have equal value;

iii. self-realisation, which could be defined as the view that every thing seeks to self-realise itself, however self-realisation is understood, i.e. as enduring for as long as it possibly could and/or as fulfilling its own purpose.

Intrinsic value and biocentric egalitarianism, for instance, are clearly at the heart of Devall and Sessions above stated principles of Deep Ecology. An example of this is principle 1. "The well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth have value in themselves. These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes.", which is clearly based on intrinsic value, and principles 2. "The richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves." and 3. "Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs.", which has its foundations in biocentric egalitarianism.

As I mentioned previously Deep Ecologists have sought in some of Spinoza's views support for their views on the subject. This may appear strange to those not greatly acquainted with Spinoza's work or who have not truly grasped the spirit of his philosophy, and as such they could pose the question: "How can a metaphysician from the 17th century provide support to the modern philosophical field of Deep Ecology?" I have already demonstrated in part II of this thesis, the part of this thesis that deals with Fichte's Spinozism, and more specifically in chapter 6, entitled "Ethics", that Spinoza's metaphysics brings with it some ethical implications. As an extension of my discussion of that particular section, it could be said that Deep Ecologists understand that given the nature of the universe, and given the nature of things in the universe, a particular kind of attitude is appropriate; given that everything is a mode of the substance, given that every thing, including human beings, are a modification of God or Nature, given that every thing is *interconnected*, human beings should treat with an attitude of reverence the other modes of creation. Spinoza must have been aware of the fact that his metaphysical system brings with it some ethical implications, otherwise why would he call his major work, a substantial metaphysical work, the Ethics? Let me rephrase this: why should a work that discusses substance, attributes, modes, in short, a work that discusses the nature of reality be entitled the Ethics if Spinoza did not hold the view that the nature of reality impinges on morality? But it is not enough here just to rely on conjecture; it is necessary for me to demonstrate how Spinoza's metaphysics provide support for those three themes in Deep Ecology, namely intrinsic value, egalitarian biocentrism and self-realisation. And I remind the reader, it is through these three themes that Deep Ecologists seek a change in human attitudes towards other entities in the universe, towards ecosystems, the planet and the universe itself. This change of attitude aims at rejecting anthropocentrism either as the notion that i. grants human being with an unwarranted

dominion over the rest of reality, or ii. the view that human beings are superior to the rest of reality. I shall demonstrate Spinozism's support for these views now.

Let me now demonstrate how two of Spinoza's theses provide support for some of the views that are defended by Deep Ecologists. Spinoza's monism provides support for the Deep Ecologist's views on intrinsic value and biocentric egalitarianism and Spinoza's thesis of conatus provides the cornerstone for the Deep Ecologist's views on the important theme of self-realisation. Let us look first at the issue of monism and intrinsic value and biocentric egalitarianism in some detail. The central point of Spinoza's Ethics is his argument in favour of monism. That is, his theory that only one substance exists and that God or Nature (*Deus sive Natura*) is a substance, and that everything is a modification of the substance. The aspect that everything is a modification of the substance implies that the substance is to be understood as the totality of all forms of Being as well as being the highest form of Being. Given that according to Spinoza everything is a modification of the substance and given that the substance is God or Nature then one can infer that the substance does not hold any sort of preference towards its modifications, because if the substance held any form of preference towards any of its modifications it would be ascribed with a humanity that is alien to it. It follows that from the perspective of the substance all its modifications possess the same value or standing, each modification possesses an intrinsic value only in so far as they are all modifications of the substance, and this value is not in any way whatsoever connected to their usefulness to human beings. And hence all modifications possess an equal intrinsic value because the substance holds no preference towards its modifications, all modifications count as the same. In other words, all modifications of the substance have the same value because from the point of view of the substance the substance holds no preference towards its modifications, and to presume otherwise

would be to invest the substance with human characteristics that are alien to it. If the substance were to ascribe more value to one of its modifications than to others then the substance would be incoherent, it would become anthropomorphic.

Deep Ecologists understand that given that the substance holds all its modes as equally important and valuable then everything - from the smallest of the substance's modification, to human beings, to ecosystems, to the remaining features of the universe itself - should be understood as possessing an intrinsic value, a value which bears no connection whatsoever to their usefulness to human beings. Deep ecologists derive their thesis of biocentric egalitarianism from the thesis of intrinsic value, that is, given that all living modifications of the substance have an equal intrinsic value then all living entities, from a slug to a human being count as the same. From the point of view of the substance it makes no difference if the universe is inhabited by slugs or amoebas or by rational entities like human beings. This is a very contentious claim and I shall come back to it below as I analyse if this is indeed the case.

There is one last implication that could be drawn from Spinoza's monism here. Given that everything is a modification of the substance, given that everything is a mode of God or Nature, then everything should be treated with some sort of reverence by all human beings exactly because they are modifications of the substance just as human beings are. In Spinoza's monism e*verything is interconnected* because everything is a modification, a mode of the substance. *Everything* is a modification of God or Nature as such it deserves to be treated with respect. It is from such a reading of Spinoza's monism that the Deep Ecologist infers his thesis of self-realisation, which he then grounds in Spinoza's thesis of conatus. Deep ecologists understand that every thing should be able to self-realise itself, should be able to fulfil itself, its purpose, its essence because everything is a mode of the substance, since the substance is

ambivalent towards its modes. I will come back to the issue of self-realisation below but before doing so I wish to refer to the following quote from Devall and Sessions (1985:67) where they explain well the interconnection between intrinsic value, biocentric egalitarianism and self-realisation:

> The intuition of biocentric equality is that all things in the biosphere have an equal right to live and blossom and to reach their own individual forms of unfolding and self-realization within the larger Self-Realization. This basic intuition is that all organisms and entities in the ecosphere, as parts of the interrelated whole, are equal in intrinsic value.

The Deep Ecologist's notion of self-realisation is connected to Spinoza's thesis of conatus, the thesis that every modification aims at enduring as it is for as long as it possibly can. Deep Ecologists have interpreted Spinoza's thesis of conatus as asserting that one should be able to fulfil oneself, as being able to fulfil one's *telos*, one's purpose. Interesting to note here that Spinoza holds that all modifications of the substance have a conatus, that is, all modifications of the substance aim at striving for as long as they possibly can as they are.[32] And this leads Deep Ecologists to hold that all entities should be able and enabled to seek fulfilment, and here some Deep Ecologists would include everything, even ecosystems, mountains, the planet etc. (cf. for

[32] NB. In Spinoza and Deep Ecology, Eccy de Jonge questions if this is indeed the case, if every thing aims at enduring for as long as it can as it is. In chapters 3 and 4 de Jonge provides an interesting and insightful discussion on this issue and it puts forward the view that sometimes one's conatus, at least in the case of human beings, may be damaged by, for instance, mental illness, abuse, etc. which may drive this particular human being to suicide or to behaviour which goes against its own conatus.

instance Lovelock's Gaia theory).[33] Following from this Deep Ecologists affirm that human beings should interfere as little as possible with the self-realisation of these other entities, as everything should be able to self-realise itself because everything has an intrinsic value and all life is held to be equal in value. This raises two questions. The first question is: what qualifies as 'little as possible'? The Deep Ecologists answer here is always vague and as such Deep Ecologists have faced a great deal of criticism on this issue. The second question is: should every thing be able to fulfil itself? What about a virus that has the potential to kill all humanity? I understand this second question to be more serious for the Deep Ecologist and I shall come back to it later when I suggest an alternative reading of Spinoza's views and their potential support for Deep Ecology.

Before proceeding, however, I wish to turn to Schelling and enquire if his views can provide support for Deep Ecology. I argue here that Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* project could also provide Deep Ecologists with support for their views since it mirrors Spinoza's philosophy so closely. Schelling's Absolute, nature, is the first and simple principle out of which everything is derived and deduced. Every thing is in one way or another *related* to the Absolute, or in other words, every thing comes under the Absolute, every thing is within and connected to nature, the absolute. Schelling also argues that nature is structured hierarchically and its activity is in accordance with the laws of evolution (vide supra p. 206), that is, Schelling asserts that in nature the most simple entities, whether processes or products, have a tendency to combine themselves in more complex entities. And this tendency is an open-ended principle because if nature was pursuing a particular *telos* then when it reached its goal it would come to an absolute rest, and as such nature's activity must be regarded as being endless. It could be argued here that since

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[33] NB. cf. James Lovelock, The Ages of Gaia, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988; Gaia,

nature's activity has no particular *telos* and is endless then all activity in nature just happens and it just becomes more complex. As such it could be said that from the point of view of nature everything has a particular value only insofar as every thing is part of nature itself and plays a part in nature's activity, and this is in no way whatsoever related to their usefulness to human beings. And here the Deep Ecologist could derive their views on intrinsic value, the intrinsic value of being part of nature and in playing a part in nature's activity. And it could also be said that each thing has the same value because to say that nature ascribes more value to a particular entity than another would be to humanise nature. And from this aspect of Schelling's philosophy the Deep Ecologist could derive their principle of biocentric egalitarianism because all living entities, be it a slug or a human being, have the same intrinsic value insofar as the absolute, nature, is concerned. It is noteworthy here that Spinoza also puts forward the proposition that simpler bodies have the tendency to combine themselves in more complex entities (vide supra. p. 207). Where Schelling differs from Spinoza and where Schelling may provide a better support for Deep Ecologists is in the fact that Spinoza only applies this proposition about the tendency that simpler entities have to combine into more complex entities to Nature as produce only (to nature as natura naturata, to individual and finite modes) whilst Schelling applies this proposition to Nature as both product (to the natura naturata, to individual and finite entities in nature) and process (to the natura naturans, to those creative processes of nature). Schelling's views here seem to be a more accurate account of the nature of reality because it portrays that both entities and processes have a tendency of becoming increasingly more complex. And as such Schelling may be in a better position to aid Deep Ecologists in their efforts of defending their view that

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Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.

everything is interconnected in one way or another and that human beings must treat the rest of reality with care.

Let me now continue with my discussion on the Deep Ecologist's thesis of self-realisation. As I mentioned above the Deep Ecologist gathers support to this thesis from Spinoza's thesis of conatus. But the Deep Ecologists could also refer to, for instance, Schelling's Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie, where Esposito (1977: 95-96) notes that, Schelling lists the following two principles:

(41) *Every individual is a totality in relation to itself*

(80) *Every individual body strives to be a totality*

These two principles that have been put forward by Schelling are similar to the following propositions by Spinoza in the Ethics:

3P6 - Everything in so far as it is in itself endeavours to persist in its own being

And

3P7 - The endeavour wherewith a thing endeavours to persist in its being is nothing else than the actual essence of that thing

It is interesting to note here that the words 'strives' and 'endeavours' and 'persists' are English translations for the Latin word *conatus* and they are usually linked to Spinoza's concept of

conatus. Let me now demonstrate the similarities between those two principles of Schelling's and those two propositions of Spinoza's. When Schelling maintains in principle (41) that *every individual is a totality in relation to itself* he is asserting that every thing is a unity, is a whole, in relation to itself; and when we add to this notion principle (81) that *every individual body strives to be a totality* we could assert that Schelling is arguing that every individual is a unity in itself and that every individual strives, endeavours to persist, as an unity, as a whole, in itself. If we turn to Spinoza's propositions (3P6) that *everything in so far as it is in itself endeavours to persist in its own being* and (3P7) that *the endeavour wherewith a thing endeavours to persist in its being is nothing else than the actual essence of that thing* then we reach much the same outcome as Spinoza is arguing here that every thing aims at persisting for as long as it possibility can because it is in every thing's nature to do so. These are very similar arguments from Schelling and Spinoza. And I note that these arguments, which are based on the notion of conatus or striving, could be used by the Deep Ecologist to ground his thesis on self-realisation, i.e. the notion that every entity should be able to self-realise themselves. The Deep Ecologist's argument here needs to be holistic and link the thesis of self realisation with the thesis of intrinsic value and biocentric egalitarianism, and it could be something like the following:

- (Proposition A) because it is in every entity's nature to strive to remain as it is for as long as it possibly could;
- (Proposition B) and given that every entity has an intrinsic value and since all entities are equal in value (from slugs and amoebas to human beings, from mountains and rivers to whole ecosystems);

- (Conclusion from A+B) then it follows that every entity should be able to strive for as long as it possibly could, should be able to fulfil its essence.

Thus far I have demonstrated that some of Spinoza's and Schelling's thesis could provide support for Deep Ecology. I wish now to move on and do two things. Firstly, I want to point out possible criticisms to the interpretation given so far of Spinoza's and Schelling's views and their possible support for Deep Ecology, and secondly, I want to suggest a different interpretation of Spinoza's and Schelling's views, an interpretation that, in my opinion, provides a better basis for the Deep Ecologist views.

I note that questions could be asked concerning the Deep Ecologist's interpretation of Spinoza's views on substance, and its consequences for Spinoza's views on conatus or *mutatis mutandis* these questions could be asked with reference to Schelling's views on the absolute and on its implications for the notion of striving in Schelling. I mean here that it could be questioned whether the substance, or the absolute for that matter, would indeed be so impartial, whether it would value an amoeba just as much as it values a human being; and connected to this, it could also be questioned whether all entities should be able and enabled to fulfil themselves, to pursue their *telos*, to strive and endeavour for as long as it possibly could. What happens when there is conflict between the conatus of one mode and of another mode? What happens when an entity's striving to remain as an unity for as long as it could jeopardises the striving of another? What happens, for instance, when the conatus of a virus conflicts with the conatus of its host human being? These are important questions that require some attention not merely for a better understanding of Spinoza's and Schelling's system but also for the field of Deep Ecology.

It is certainly true that Spinoza's substance and Schelling's absolute are the basis of all reality, and that everything is a modification of the substance (in the case of Spinoza) or relative to the absolute (in the case of Schelling). It is also certainly true that the substance and the absolute do not possess a *telos* since if they did there would be a time when reality would come to a stand still. So far so good for the Deep Ecologist. The weak point of their interpretation comes in connection with their understanding that Spinoza's substance 'does not hold any sort of preference towards its modifications or relative entities' or their possible understanding that Schelling's absolute 'does not hold any sort of the preference towards entities that are relative to it'. They interpret the substance, and they could interpret the absolute, as being totally impartial because to ascribe partiality to the substance and to the absolute would be to anthropomorphise them.

The question here is: is ascribing partiality to the substance or to the absolute ascribing them with human features? The Deep Ecologist certainly thinks so. But one could still question this by referring to another aspect of Spinoza's and Schelling's system, that is, that the substance and the absolute are akin to an organism, and not to a mechanical apparatus, and that Spinoza and Schelling are defending an idealism-realism or a realism-idealism, and not merely realism or idealism as some commentators have held in the past. The implications of holding the substance and the absolute as organisms, and of defending an idealism-realism or realism-idealism, are important here since the substance and the absolute start to share similarities with live and conscious organisms. That is, the substance and the absolute as organisms are alive, and because the substance and the absolute also possess the features of thought and extension, subjectivity and objectivity, this also implies that the substance and the absolute possess some sort of consciousness. Perhaps the sort of consciousness that Kant ascribed to God with an immediate

intellectual intuition in which to think p is to be presented with p without the mediation of sensibility, or perhaps a much more primal and latent sort of consciousness that realises itself in all its modifications or relative entities, or perhaps even a well developed sort of consciousness that realises itself in its most developed modes or relative entities, viz. the human being, something akin to Hegel's *Geist*. Either way, if the substance or the absolute is understood as akin to some sort of conscious organism then it is possible to hold that the substance or the absolute do hold some sort of preference towards some of its modes or relative entities. For instance, I, as an organism, do not care much for the bits of skin that fall from my body continuously, but I do care about my limbs and my vital organs. In the same way, the substance or the absolute may not care as much for its simpler modifications or relative entities such as amoebas or slugs or viruses, but they may care more for a more developed mode or relative entity such as the human being. The only way to counterbalance this perspective would be to argue that every entity is *necessary* in the chain of *Being*, that is, that without smaller entities such as amoebas or slugs or viruses that Nature's development would come into a hold or be hindered. To argue this would be to give up on the notion that Nature has no *telos* that things in nature *just happen*. To argue that there is a necessary chain of Being is to argue that Nature is pursuing a particular developmental avenue and this contradicts Spinoza's and Schelling's that Nature has no *telos* because if it did then when it reached its *telos* reality would come into a halt. The thesis of nature having no *telos* has to be undermined first, which is a difficult thing to do. The burden of proof here is with those who challenge this thesis.

Spinoza certainly never advocated such views openly (i.e. that the substance is conscious and that it may hold some sort of preference towards some of its modifications), and given his historical biography and his philosophical development, it is doubtful that he would have even

contemplated this. Schelling never advocated this openly either, but he probably set the seeds for such a development in Hegel's Philosophy of Spirit and the theory of *Geist*, the absolute for Hegel, an absolute that is conscious and that discovers and unfolds itself through human history. Still, it is important to point out that such a development could be drawn from Spinoza's and Schelling's systems, and this development may just cast enough doubt on the Deep Ecologist's thesis of intrinsic value and biocentric egalitarianism because if the substance or the absolute hold some sort of preference towards some of its modes or relative entities then some modes and entities may be viewed differently by the substance or absolute and this is damaging to intrinsic value (i.e. some entities may not have a value at all for the substance or absolute) and to biocentric egalitarianism (i.e. some entities are more valuable than others to the substance or absolute). This may present a major problem to Deep Ecologists, such as Naess and Devall and Sessions whose Deep Ecological views are, by and large, heavily based on the issues of intrinsic value and biocentric egalitarianism, and as such this problem may render ineffective the Deep Ecologist's call for a change in human attitudes towards live beings, ecosystems, the planet and the universe. The Deep Ecologist may just have to give up on the thesis of intrinsic value and biocentric egalitarianism.

Despite facing this challenge not all is lost to Deep Ecologists. Some of Spinoza's and Schelling's views may still provide support to Deep Ecology by following a different strategy. A more productive and accurate path, in my opinion, has been tread by Deep Ecologists such as Matthews (1991), who places more weight in the thesis of self-realisation and who seeks in Spinoza's thesis of conatus the basis for her views. Let me demonstrate how this can be achieved. In general Deep Ecologists derive their views of self-realisation from their views on

the intrinsic value and biocentric egalitarianism. It is perhaps worth quoting the following passage of Devall and Sessions (1985:67) again here:

> The intuition of biocentric equality is that all things in the biosphere have an equal right to live and blossom and to reach their own individual forms of unfolding and self-realization within the larger Self-Realization. This basic intuition is that all organisms and entities in the ecosphere, as parts of the interrelated whole, are equal in intrinsic value.

And as I have stated and argued there may be some serious problems concerning the Deep Ecologist views on intrinsic value and biocentric egalitarianism. However, I understand that it is possible to bypass or give up on intrinsic value and biocentric egalitarianism and still hold on to the thesis of self-realisation by referring solely to Spinoza's thesis of conatus, or to Schelling's views on striving, and by also referring to the *interconnectivity* of all things since everything is a mode of the substance or an entity that is relative to the absolute. But let me explain this in some detail here.

The reader might recall that in Part II of this thesis, on Fichte, in chapter 6 entitled "Ethics", I dealt with the issue of conatus also. There it was established that prima facie, Spinoza appears to be an ethical egoist, since he defends the view that one should pursue whatever would benefit one's conatus, one's pursuit of self-realisation, one's striving to endure for as long as one possibly could. So for Spinoza it is true that human beings are primarily egoists since each individual human being wants to preserve his own life for as long as he possibly could (and to do so he must consider the consequences of every action to himself, i.e. ethical egoism). But in

doing so, human beings realise that all other human beings are pursuing the same goal and in the same manner. This very fact, demonstrates that the best thing for a human being to do is to team up with other human beings. To do otherwise would result in wars, violence and disputes, which would threaten, and not-enhance, one's existence. By working as a group, human beings are able to help each other to endure for as long as they possibly could.[34] Therefore, that form of individualism that first strikes any commentator on Spinoza is fast replaced by a form of communitarianism once Spinoza's system is truly understood. It is worth quoting the following passages of Ethics again since they corroborate what I have just said:

> 4P31 - In so far as anything agrees with our nature, thus far it is necessarily good.
>
> 4P35 - In so far as men live under the guidance of reason, thus far only they always necessarily agree in nature.
>
> 4P36 - The greatest good of those who follow virtue (*reason*) is common to all, and all can equally enjoy it. [my brackets]
>
> 4P37 - The good which each one who follows virtue (*reason*) desires for himself, he also desires for other men, and the more so the more knowledge he has of God (*Nature*). [my brackets]

[34] NB. Perhaps here we see that tendency that simpler entities have of combining themselves into more complex ones at work in a very interesting way. By combining themselves, human

As it is quite clear, these four propositions are concerned with the relations between human beings and the conditions for a mutually beneficial and sustained intercourse in community life. It is also worth quoting the following passage from Garrett (1997:227) again:

> Spinoza holds, as a general metaphysical thesis, that whenever two things "agree in nature" they will, to that extent, be mutually beneficial, since the nature that each strives to benefit is the same (E4P31). Human beings necessarily "agree in nature" to the extent that they are guided by reason (E4P35). For human reason, as reason, is the same in all, and it aims at the same thing - namely, knowledge or understanding. Understanding, moreover, is a good that can be shared by all without diminishing anyone's enjoyment of it (E4P36). In fact, Spinoza holds, nothing is more useful to a human being than another human being who is guided by reason (E4P35c1). Hence, individuals who are virtuous, or guided by reason, will all seek, from their own self-interest, the same goods for others that they seek for themselves (E4P37). Indeed to the extent that if a community of human beings is guided by reason, its members can "compose, as it were, one Mind and one Body" (E4P18s) - that is, a complex individual, composed of like-minded human beings, that has its own endeavour of self-preservation.

Therefore, according to Spinoza, it is in a human being's interest, who is guided by reason, to associate himself with other human beings, since they are all pursuing the same goals. That is, they are all pursuing self-knowledge and knowledge of the world around themselves in their

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beings, create a supra-human-entity, i.e. a community, which in turn develops itself into larger

attempt to live for as long as they possibly can. It is at this point, I understand, that Deep Ecologists could come in. They could argue that given that everything is *interconnected*, since everything is a mode of the substance, that it is in the human being's best interest to establish the same sort of 'communitatarian relationship', not only with other human beings, but with the whole of existing entities, with all the other modes of the substance. For instance, given that everything is *interconnected*, is it not problematic for human beings themselves if human beings destroy a particular species or ecosystem? Since everything is *interconnected*, if human beings do not establish a communitarian relation with the other entities, from the smallest modes to ecosystems, then there may be consequences that will come about due to such human behaviour. For instance, if an ecosystem is destroyed then its biodiversity richness is destroyed and with it the knowledge that it could yield, knowledge of animal species and animals' behaviour, knowledge of plant species, not to mention knowledge of the chemical compounds that these species could yield, compounds which could yield new and more effective medicines against human ailments for instance.

By linking the notions of interconnectivity and *conatus* which are found in both Spinoza and Schelling we can reach the conclusion that human beings should do their best to maintain equilibrium with all things because this is in their own interest. I believe this to be a better position than the position argued for by most Deep Ecologists for it calls for a change in human attitude but it does not do away with human discretion for action. For instance, when faced with the dilemma of destroying an ecosystem for harvesting its wood, the human being will have to ponder whether it is worth destroying that particular environment for that purpose or whether it is more beneficial to harvest the wood somewhere else or even to replace the wood by another

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supra-human-entities, such as states and nations.

material; or when faced with the opportunity of killing a virus and saving the human host, let's say small pox, the human being will be able to decide for the human life with no qualms for the human life is a higher modification of the substance (within the reading that the substance holding a preference for its higher modifications) or simply because the human being's conatus calls for it, the human being's striving for enduring for as long as it possibly could demands it. This outcome should appease those who are suspicious of views based on intrinsic value and biological egalitarianism for their higher demands on human behaviour.

Schelling's system would yield much the same argument, given that he holds that every thing is relative to the absolute, and given that he also holds the thesis of striving as a unity. Everything is *interconnected* insofar as everything is related to the absolute and everything strives to remain as an unity. The metaphysics of Spinoza are imbedded in Schelling's views on this issue. The implications of this metaphysics only need to be teased out as Schelling never advocated that human beings would fare better by associating themselves in their pursuit of their interests, he did however call for a change of human attitude towards nature, human beings should see nature not as the *other*, human beings should rather see themselves as part and parcel of nature itself. It is perhaps worth quoting the following passage of Schelling (1988:10-11) here again:

> As soon as man sets himself in opposition to the external world, the first step to philosophy has been taken. With that separation, reflection first begins; he separates from now on what Nature has always united, separates the object from the intuition, the concept from the image, finally (in that he becomes his own object) himself from himself. But this separation is only *means* not *end*....Man is

> not born to waste his mental power in conflict against the fantasy of an imaginary world, but to exert all his powers upon a world which has influence upon him, lets him feel its forces, and upon which he can react. Between him and the world, therefore, no rift must be established; contact and reciprocal action must be possible between the two, for only so does man become man...But its preoccupation with dissection does not extend only to the phenomenal world; so far as it separates the spiritual principle from this, it fills the intellectual world with chimeras, against which, because they lie beyond all reason, it is not even possible to fight. It makes the separation between man and the world permanent, because it treats the latter as a thing in itself, which neither intuition, nor imagination, neither understanding nor reason, can reach.

As such, Spinoza's and Schelling's views could provide Deep Ecologists with a strong ground to defend their views, to defend their call for a change in human attitudes towards the whole. Deep Ecologists may just achieve this by demonstrating that everything is *interconnected*, by demonstrating that we have a choice in changing our attitudes, by demanding a shift of perspective that involves the way we see the world, and by also acknowledging that every thing aims at enduring for as long as it possibly could. Before concluding this section I would like to quote the following passage of Matthews (1991:140) who explains well this possible shift of attitude:

> Our identity as human beings is....demonstrably as much a function of our culture as it is of our ecological relations. So if our culture is not a regional one,

> ecologically integrated with the elements of a particular environment, then to that extent we as individuals are not ecologically integrated either. Having stepped back from a particular ecological role we have indeed to a certain extent stepped out of nature - and this standing outside is mirrored in our freedom to choose how we shall live. Of course given the freedom of choice, we can *choose* to make culture an instrument of Nature. With the level of *objective* knowledge already attained we can readily recognize our physical dependence on general forms of life such as vegetation and soil micro-organisms. It would be possible, in light of this knowledge, consciously to build a reverent and conservationist attitude into the concepts of these life-forms - in the sense that these concepts could acquire an emotive charge, a connotation of preciousness, as the concept says, motherhood tends to have. If such attitudes were built into the very concepts of the elements of the global environment, then the resultant culture would be determined by its system of representation to prescribe ecologically positive patterns of interaction with the environment.

To conclude this section. At the outset of this section I set to provide a brief characterisation of Deep Ecology and to demonstrate that Deep Ecologists have sought support in some of Spinoza's thesis for their own views, and that they can achieve much the same by referring to Schelling's views. I have argued that their views on intrinsic value and biocentric egalitarianism may present some serious problems, and I have suggested that they could give up on these and still advocate Deep Ecology by defending self-realisation and by referring to Spinoza's thesis of conatus and by the interconnectivity of all things in the substance. This suggestion may prove to

be a more desirable path as it avoids the short comings of intrinsic value and biocentric egalitarianism. I have also demonstrated that Schelling's systems may yield much the same suggestion.

CONCLUSION

In chapter 1 I demonstrated that the common understanding that Spinoza's views were successfully suppressed in the late 17th century is mistaken. In fact, my research in this area yields quite the opposite view, Spinozism was not entirely and successfully suppressed at the time, and it was being spread either through the works of commentators who felt that they needed to reply to Spinoza's views, or through the works of Spinoza's supporters who disguised Spinoza's views in their works; moreover, about a hundred years after Spinoza first published his works and thanks to the pantheism controversy, Spinozism and its views became fashionable again and were discussed in the open without fears of the reprisals that had occurred in the years that immediately proceeded the publication of Spinoza's works. Chapter 2 provided an outline of the Enlightenment and Romantic movements and the philosophical crises of the time which led to either scepticism or dogmatism. In chapter 3 I outlined Kant's project in the *First* Critique and I demonstrated that he was unsuccessful in solving the crises, and this led Fichte and Schelling to seek in some of Spinoza's views the solutions to the problems of the Critical Philosophy of Kant. In chapters 4 and 5, I believe, I provided a very detailed analysis of Fichte's and Schelling's Spinozism. There I demonstrated that both Fichte and Schelling acknowledged in letters that they were very influenced by some of Spinoza's views, and this point has also been corroborated by both commentators of the time and modern commentators. I have also demonstrated in these two chapters the many similarities between some of Fichte's and Schelling's views and some of Spinoza's views. Some of these similarities are Fichte's Absolute I and Spinoza's substance, Fichte's and Spinoza's understanding of freedom and determinism, and the similarities between their Ethical views which place them within the Stoic tradition; or Schelling's Absolute and

Spinoza's substance, Schelling's and Spinoza's concepts of *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*, and Schelling's and Spinoza's possible support to the field of Deep Ecology.

At the outset of this thesis I stated that my main aim was to demonstrate that some of Spinoza's views were a major influence in Fichte's and Schelling's respective philosophical developments. I wish to draw particular attention to and re-state here the fact that Fichte and Schelling sought in some Spinozist views either the answers to the problems which were left unanswered by the Critical Philosophy of Kant or the solution to some inherent problems of the Kantian system itself. As such it is worth mentioning here some points which were discussed at length in chapters 4 and 5. For instance, Fichte and Schelling saw in Spinoza's thesis of monism a very appealing avenue to be followed in pursuit of finding solutions to the problems faced by Kantianism - one such problem was the various dichotomies of the Critical Philosophy of Kant, which rendered it a non-unified system, and as such open to various criticisms at the time, such as the problem of the relationship between the thing-in-itself and appearances which was pointed out by Jacobi, and the problem of the connectivity between sensibility and understanding which was pointed out by Maimon (problems which I discussed in chapter 3).

As the research into this thesis progressed a few issues aroused my attention, issues which deserve further research and which are not dealt with in this thesis, but which I would hope to devote attention in the future. One such issue concerns Fichte's notion of the summum bonum as the search for perfection, for perfecting oneself and one's community. This search for perfection is achieved through knowledge, knowledge of one's nature and of the nature of the world (NB. in Spinoza, the reader may recall, the summum bonum is understood as self-preservation which is achieved through knowledge of oneself and of the world around one). This notion, found in Fichte, the notion of perfecting oneself and of perfecting the world, is also found

in Jewish Ethics, in the Jewish notion of *Tikkun Olam*, in perfecting the world. *Tikkun Olam* is a notion that could be characterised by the following dictum: one must aim at perfection in whatever one does. To my knowledge, it is only Fichte among modern western philosophers, who develops this notion. This fact per se raises questions. One such question is the following: since Fichte was not Jewish could he have picked this up through a particular reading of Spinoza, given that Spinoza was Jewish and a major influence on Fichte? Another question that could be raised here is: given that both Fichte and Jewish ethics defend this notion of perfecting oneself and the world around oneself then does this mean that God did not create the best of all possible worlds? If so could this raise doubts regarding the nature of God, about his perfection and his powers? This second question raises numerous issues for Philosophy of Religion and Theology and a study of the *Midrash* (i.e. those imaginative texts about *Torah* or Bible stories written by rabbis throughout the ages) and of the *Talmud* (i.e. the collection of Jewish thoughts and laws compiled between 200 BCE to 500 CE) along with Fichte's writings may shed some light on this issue.

Insofar as Schelling is concerned I believe that an attempt to develop a Deep Ecology based on Schelling's views and system may prove to be a very satisfactory and interesting project. Especially given that, as I mentioned in the section on Deep Ecology, Schelling's account of reality is more accurate than Spinoza's because Schelling applies the notion of complexity to nature's products (*natura naturata*) and also to nature's processes (*natura naturans*), whilst Spinoza only applies this notion to nature's products. In pursuing this avenue I have suggested that Deep Ecologists should give up on the notions of intrinsic value and biocentric egalitarianism, notions which aim at undermining anthropocentrism, and rather emphasise the *interconnectivity* of everything, which is based on the thesis of monism, and the

natural tendency that every thing has to strive to continue as it is and for as long as it possibly could, which is based on the thesis of striving or conatus. This avenue, as I suggested, may yield a more satisfactory form of Deep Ecology since it largely avoids those criticisms faced by the Deep Ecologist's thesis of intrinsic value and biocentric egalitarianism.

As a concluding remark I wish to remind the reader that this thesis was written in an attempt to provide a detailed study of the influence of Spinozism on Fichte and Schelling. In doing so I aimed at providing a better understanding of Fichte's and Schelling's systems by demonstrating that Fichte's and Schelling's philosophy should not be merely understood in the light of the Critical Philosophy of Kant but also under the influence of some of Spinoza's views. Both Kant and Spinoza set the background for a proper understanding of Fichte's and Schelling's system, and without this background their philosophical systems are in danger of not being properly understood or interpreted. If by reaching these final lines the reader feels that he has gained a better understanding of Fichte's and Schelling's philosophy through my analysis of Fichte and Schelling as Kantians as well as Spinozists, as well as a better understanding of some of Spinoza's views, then I shall consider my goals in this thesis attained.

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